

the

JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

3 DOLLARS

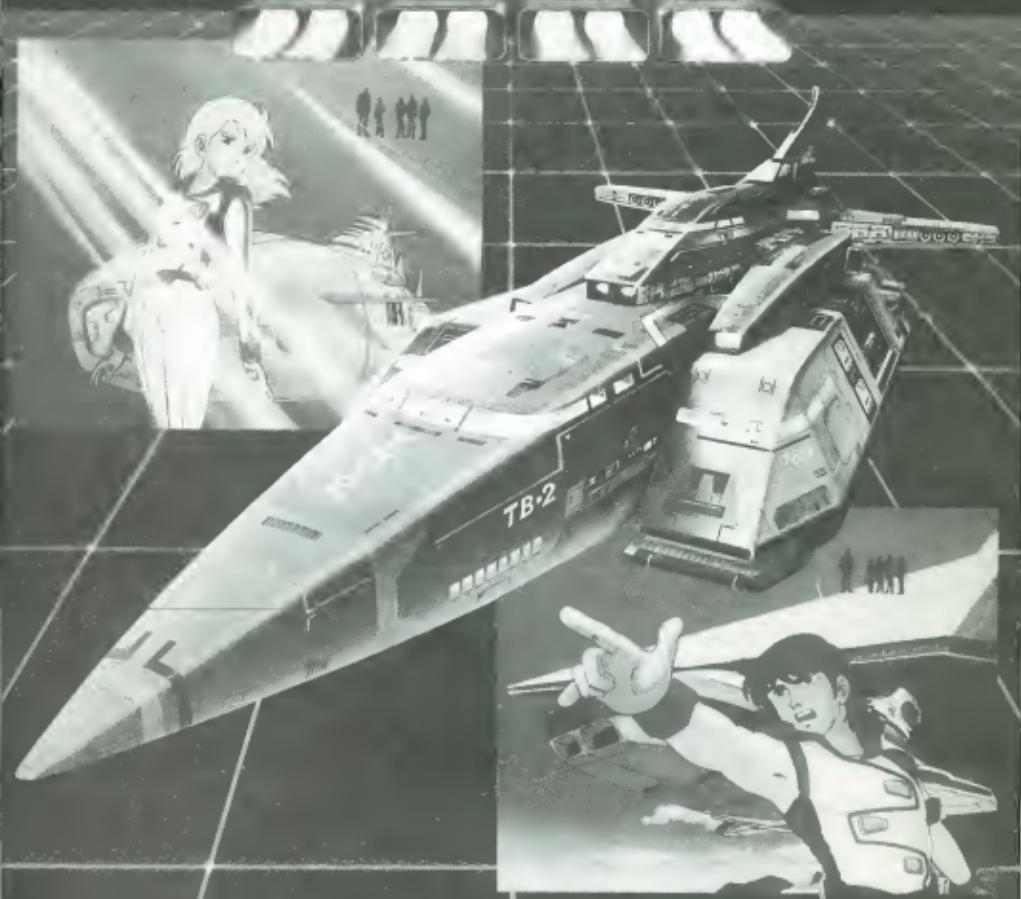


GODZILLAS,
CATASTROPHES,
VAMPIRES &
MORE IN THE
TOHO LEGACY
1970-1979



THUNDERBIRDS

2086



DAZZLING SPACE-AGE ANIMATED
ADVENTURES FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY



ENTERTAINMENT

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安彦良和第二回監督作品

JOE クラッシュ☆ジョウ

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FAR EAST REPORT

CLOSEUP

Compiled by
August Ragone

Shinsei Org.

MONSTER RID (KABUTO KUN, JAP. LFL, MIGHTY) The first of several unedited theatrical features starring the title character created by Toho. *Hyaku Ni Yume* from the *Monster* Rid's TV series appeared in this 40 min. 25 minute film distributed by Toho. (See article in *TV* column)

21 EYES The adventures of a young teen who works on a bellhop in a sleazy international hotel. Set in the future, the unedited film was released in 1981 by Toho.

DOKAREMON FESTIVAL French unedited feature in the *Dokaremon* series about a cat from the *Land* who is transported into our present time. This latest adventure which he shares with his human friend Nobata was distributed by Toho. Release date is unknown.

DOKAREMON—NESTINA NO KASHE (NESTINA)

HATONDAI (KABUTO KUN, JAPAN, JAPAN, DA, YOUNG, TEEN, 1981, COLOR) *MONSTER RID* (JAPAN)

TOYOTSU NO KABO (TOYOTSU THE INDIAN)

PAKAMAN—HAKODAMAN HAS COMB A triple bill of short film features released May 12, 1983. (See

article on *PAKAMAN* in *TV* column)

SHOBITSU'S EVIL WORLD ADVENTURE A new *Doraemon* feature starring Nobata and Noburu the *Robot*. The film is set for a March, 1984 release.

Trunks Pro.

UNEDD WITCH ISLAND Unfinished 40 min. film as *Doremi's Return* (see *TV* column) it was not released until Aug. 10, 1983. The various feature was unedited by *Shobitsu*, not *Trunks Pro*, and was distributed by Toho.

PRINCE ROSE Made for TV unedited feature which was broadcast Aug. 21, 1983.

Shochiku

SUPERMAN LOGUE (MIGHTY LOGUE) Set for a March, 1984 release, this unedited feature is based on the *Logue* complex and very adult Japanese comic series.

AI Planning Center

RAINBOWMAN, WARRIOR OF LOVE Animated TV series remake of the early *animes* live action TV series with major changes including the transformation of all 3 color/element heroes into a superhero type hero. Series premiered Oct. 10, 1982.

Santoro

SUTTON RIDGE 25 half hour episode, unedited video series about heroes forced to provide for production.

FLASHBACK For release in 1983 an unedited feature about facets designed for a more adult audience.

LEGEND OF SIRIUS (Sirius) (1981) unedited feature (see *TV* column) released Jan. 1982. It was broadcast on U.S. cable television. In 1983 it is *SEA PRINCE* AND *THE CHILD*.

Cinema Placet/Penssione Films

HAIRWOOD—THE FANTASTIC COMEDY A live-action feature (see *TV* column) feature released June 3, 1982. It was directed and scripted by Takahashi.

CRUSHER JOE (1983), the title of *Star Dogs* animated feature and a group of easier space soldiers of fortune promoted in poster art, left. *Takaboshi* (see *TV* column) is the title of an *animel* series most recent television entry. *ULTRAMAN 80* (1982), shows above. The year earlier, *Takaboshi* Pre. bought out an *animel* firm for its *animel* series *THE ULTRAMAN* (1979), right.



Newspaper with stop-motion sequences unedited by Ooyoshi Yamada. Running time is 85 minutes.

Haruki Kadokawa Office

CAT WHO LEAPS OVER TIME (TOHO) (1981)

Unedited Japanese photos of this live action Matsumi suggests a story and especially its setting. The film was originally made for the Japanese market and was never released in the U.S. until travel film *SOHONSHI-EN TATE* (Released July 16, 1983). The film was directed by Hisahiko Ohbayashi (MOURN, LEGEND OF THE ELEGANT CAT GHOST).

SHIROFU OF KAMIE A new version of the story of the white rabbit Xeman to be directed by Tokuo Nakamura and released in Japan to set a release some time in 1984.

MARINACE 2000 (SEIYU ANGUS, aka EXIL)

PHANTOM CONFLICT An *animel* produced by Haruki Kadokawa and Shizuku Ishizuka and directed by Tokuo Imai (GALAXY EXPRESS 999). An *animel* about a group of people who travel to Earth and slowly, reluctantly begin converting it. It has done so many times before to other planets. An equal era opposite existence includes that pal powers in a cycling world from planet Vigo in Japanese youth, a princess from Shesyle, a young girl who can fly, and a man who can fly.

THE GHOST OF THE GHOST (THE GHOST) Unedited feature directed by Hisahiko Ohbayashi, the egotistic director who also helmed a similar chick on the *WESTERN* movie, *THE LIVING HORSE*, based on a psychological mystery play written by Kenzaburo Oshita and published in 1954. The three featured characters are the director, his wife, Shizuka (Haruki Kadokawa) and Junzo Miyamoto, are involved in a love triangle in which a single man is interested in his friend's wife. Apologized by his friend's blind amnesia and continued expressions of love, the husband then doth his wife's salary and decides to leave her. She then goes to the police to claim the man is killed. Husband and wife flee to escape prosecution yet their flight is fraught with the constant worry of the death of their friend. Still the two continue their journey, but these on foot will take a shadow figure.

Shogakukan

BAKUSA NO BAKUTEN A fantasy comedy art series featuring the adventures of the descendants of a human royal clan family. The show premiered Nov. 1982 and stars Hidetomo ("Sally") Sezutsu, although he returned for

Nippon Animation

ALICE IN WONDERLAND (ALICE NO KOURO NO ALICE)

An unedited and serialized adaptation of the classic. The program began Oct. 1983.

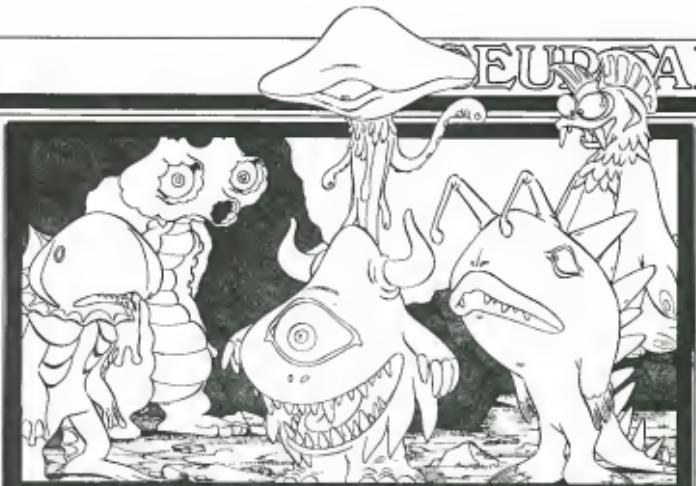
MYUJI An unedited video series which began airing May, 1983. It is a situation comedy with quite a bit of fantasy thrown into its stories.

PEYAL ISLAND An unedited fantasy comedy TV show featuring a group of sea serpents, talking animals, mermaids, and other weirdness. Premiered June, 1983.

Musubi Pro.

GREEN ISLAND (GREEN ISLAND KUNIBE) Pending for a 1984 release is this fantasy film about China a girl cat. To be released by Nippon Herald.





In production is **MONSTER GANG** from **Tabuanya Productions**. Several of the characters are to be incorporated into the TV series as shown right. **MONSTER GANG** will be animated which is an unusual direction for **Tabuanya Pro**, which has only one other animated series to its videography. Left: three photos from **Tabuanya's** animation **GOOGLE 5 JOKA GOGORU** 1981-82, the name of the giant robot shown left, center, an eagle, dogasaurus, right, a eagle in a 8 member, while far left are two of the **GOOGLE**'s mates, the Mercurian King **Reba** and **Death Gator**.

Miyazaki Pro

MANICCA (ANISHNAWEE) To be released theatrically in March, 1984, this feature details a story about the Ojibway character, a young, wistful woman who lives on another planet. Over 1000 storyboards have been created for this one hour and fifty minute long film based on a oral tradition. Hayo Miyamoto's illustrated story which appeared in *Arlequin* magazine from 1962-1963. Tokihiko Takemoto, who has worked on *GOJIRAHOWA*, *DRASHMAN*, *SHAMAN*, *SHAMAN* (1980) and other animated efforts, will be a key animator on this project for which Miyamoto serves as art director.

Tokyo Movie Shinsha

St. Louis to the populist. His rambling comic strip in the *Comix* magazine comes to life again (his first film). A live action feature bearing the same title and produced by *Loco*, is largely generated by fans of the comic strip in an amateurish preface using the *Conan* technique and complete seriousness. Golgo 73 is an assassin, the best in the world — cool, cannibal, nihilistic, as nihilistic as the world he lives in — but Alida Suleyra directed the film which is based on the title character created by Golgo 73. *Loco* elaborated. The feature premiered May 28, 1983.

8. **GOD MARS**—GOD MARS Alan Seeger licensed as director for this 20 minute release and Dec 18, 1982 and distributed by *Tele-Image* new footage which included new characters and sequences was added to footage from the **GOD MARS** tele vision show to create this film. The TV series has 52 episodes.

COBRA—SPACE ADVENTURE (as previously \$1 feature distributed by Tele Town in May 1952) Serially titled TV program, consisting of 32 half hour episodes, premiered Oct., 1952 and more. (I believe I followed the original comic book series which were discarded by the busy studio tagline [See article elsewhere in this issue].

INTER SPACE CENTURY DISRUSS An amateur TV show which premiered July 3, 1983. In 2042 an enormous mobile nuclear reactor tower is visited by Communist forces. The Free World nations and the Trident Space Corps join in a plan to recapture it if necessary. Destroy the structure with an arsenal of A, B, C, D & weapons: atomic, biological, chemical and dimensional. The dimensional element unblocks gates and eliminates the Earth. A young soldier caught up in the dimensional war created by the explosion, is sent to another planet along with the Hollards jet to fly it. And there he is conscripted into a war between a race of humans and alienistic oppressors. Directed by Haruhiko Mikimoto (MAMET2550).

CAT'S EYE Based on a Claude & Argos' influenced comic which appeared in *Shonen Jump* comic, the TV series concerns three super secret agents and their bizarre exploits set in dystopianary times. The cartoon program, which premièred July 11, 1993, was directed by Hideo Miyazaki and Yusuke Okada, a man responsible for a large majority of animated material including **LITTLE NORI PRINCE VILLAIN** and **LUPIN III**.

LUGNIN III **AKTIN** anatomized visual scenes on this region is planned to begin April 1981. And what's more, the Japanese government has the state of the province of Aogashima Maruyama, Lushan, to cover LUPIN III's elaborate Monkey Punch and Tokyo Movie Shonen production house for Lupin III films and the like. Due to the use of the Lupin character and character line for new films, the *Zenzo* company has been given the right to use the Lupin and Monkey Punch as well as the Lupin III character and can license it in their broad commercial advertisements. The latest news is being directed by Hisaya Akiyama and Satoru Ochiai. The first film is planned for the early summer of 1981 in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the feature **LUPIN III - EAGLESLOG'S CASTLE**, as well as many reupped episodes from the second season when Yoh Oishi of the *One* and the *Apocalypse* bands have agreed to score the scenes, having also composed the music for both Lupin III features and

the science-fiction series *SHERLOCK HOUND*. Announced last issue, this animated, funny animal TV series version of *Sherlock Holmes* adventures from Hiroyuki Miyazaki and Tetsuo Gotohka premiered on the HBO cable network in The U.S. in Nov., 1983.

WENSON/MICHAEL'S *NEED* Budgeted at \$15 million this summer *Twilight Zone* creator/writer announced an additional *NEED* will be co-produced by Gary Kurtz (Hollywood-based *Kinatragraphics*, Kurtz has previously produced *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes*

BACK, and THE GARDEN CRYSTAL. EMA acquired the rights to the project from the family of Wheeler Thaxton, the twin sons of the century American artist and naturalist whose highly successful *Cattle Herds in Shropshire* comic strip ran for 11 years in the New York *Advertiser*, beginning Oct. 15, 1908. Asbury is wedging in *Rehearsal* on the script which will be re-directed by Andy Gaskill a 12 year old former Disney animator. A Japanese co-director is being sought. John Williams has been hired to compose the score.

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Toku is the director of several animated short films which were produced by independent animation houses: THE SPARROW'S GROWTH/BOH OF THE DESIGN (15 mins), THE BIG DIPPER (13 mins), and LITTLE PIG RIDING HOOT (18 mins).

KABA KABA is the animated adventure of monkey Kaba Kaba who originally appeared in Mengestu Gheg's *The Tibetan Story* presented on NTV October 1983.

TERUMO TOHNOH: ANIMATED TV series a low-comedy comedy with animation which premiered Oct. 1 1993.

TAKEUCHI JAPANESE: A low angle of fewest based on takemoto (bamboo) and one and a half, 1993, 1994. Director: Kazuhiko Yamamoto, Kenjiro Saito, director, log. Hayato Yamada and Takao Kanazawa. Special effects director: Kazuhiko Yamamoto. Story: Takeuchi Kuni. Music: Ito Hiroshi Horie, Daisuke Sengoku. Art director: Mami Miyoshi Oiso, Chieko Yamada. Camera: Toshiaki Yamada. Sound: Toshiaki Yamada. Color: Kuni Yamashita and Ito Shigeta. Production: Gekkyoku Seisaku Kansai. In the 22nd season, a sleek black horse saves our solar system, but Zeta scientists declare a 10-year project. The Jupiter Link Plan Project—which will cause Jupiter to become an artificial planet—has been taken into the black hole and kept off course.

PLAQUELS SANSKROD Announced 9/1989 /
Kamen TV series featuring wrestling robots which
premiered June 5 1983 / PLA is short for play
model as created by Kamen. For more info

Tsuburaya Pro

In addition to producing a new, adult, animated television series tentatively titled **MONSTER GANG**, **Tubroney Productions** is planning to get involved in publishing. Over the years the company has developed a large fan base of collectors who are interested in the original art and original comic strips. For the benefit of a potential 1,000 book sales per year in the form of short illustrated works, **Tubroney** is also planning to make a complete illustrated feature, **Adult Disney's T-Rex** which cost as estimated \$30 million, the Japanese company plans a substantially lower budget feature. The equipment for computer generated animation is available today, but what's lacking is the know how to use it to best advantage. **Tubroney** is therefore, aiming to obtain exports from U.S. universities to assist the production team. If the film is a success

ULTRAMAN—HERO FROM THE STARS To have been directed by Akio Jissoji, scripted by Mamoru Shusaku, and co-financed by ABC, the film has been awaited.

ANDROS MELCH A live action Ultraman like TV series which premiered March 1983 on TBS. Monday through Friday. The program consists of 45 one minute episodes which are broadcast between shows starting at 8:45 and beginning at 6 p.m.

LEGEND OF THE SURGANT CAT'S GHOST (RUSUDON BUNETSU) A live action horror picture made for television. The film was broadcast Aug. 30, 1983 and was directed by Nobuhiko Obayashi & Hiroshi

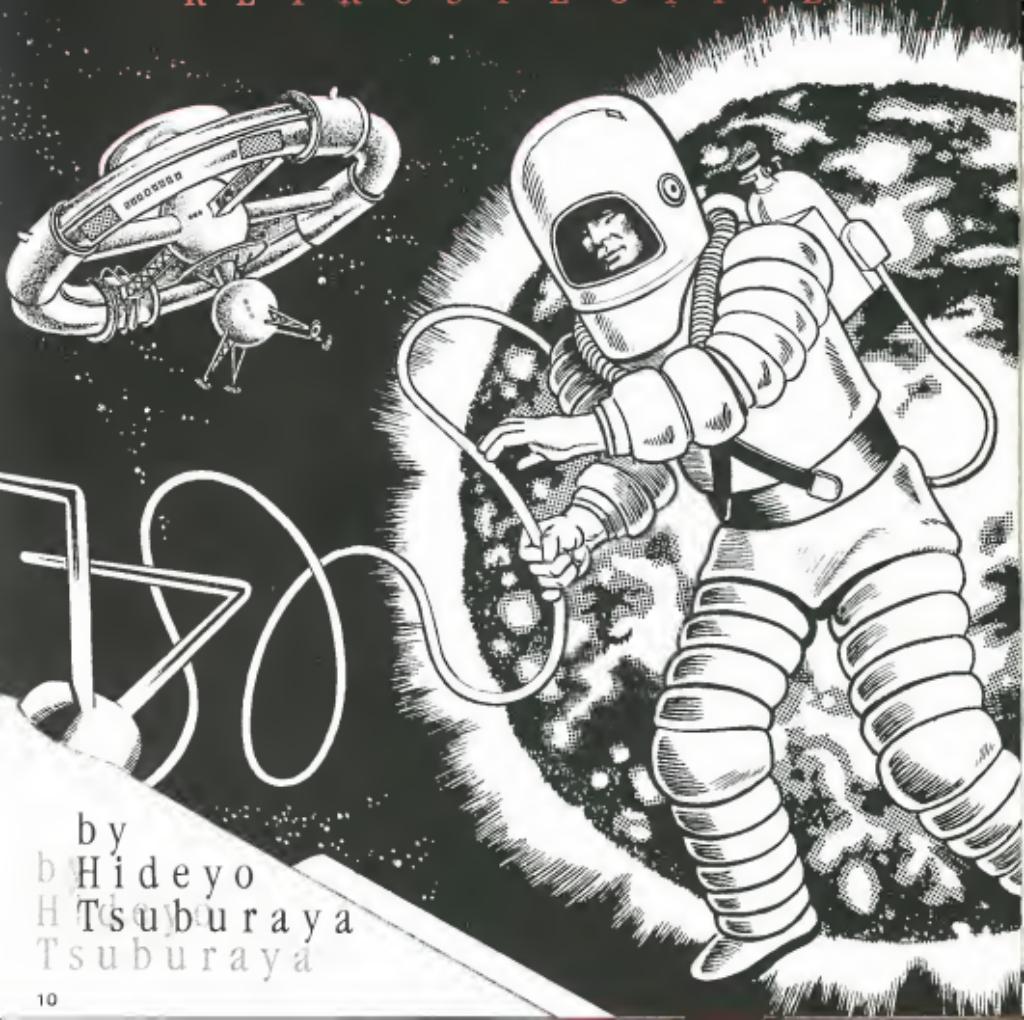
West Case, Com

TRIAL YAMATO (UCHIBORO) YAMATO KAN
KETHI (KU) The last released of *Memory* feature
which premiered March 19, 1983. The distributed
The film was released in Nov., 1983 in a 70mm
format less 20 minutes from the original print.
KING 168-001-236 The narrative role of 10 hours



GORATH

RETROSPECTIVE



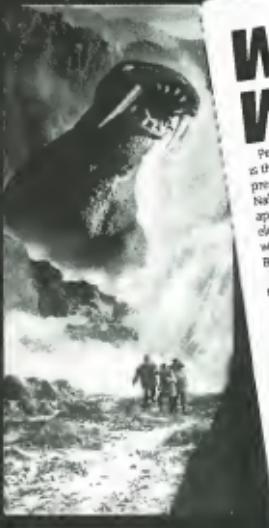
by
Hideo
H. Tsuburaya
Tsuburaya

R is the year 1980. A heavenly body hurtling through space has been discovered by Earth orbiters and deep probes. The ion drive-propelled J-X Hawk, commanded by Chief Astronaut Sonoda and sent to analyze the phenomenon, approaches too close and is sucked into the fiery object, but not before relaying important data back to Earth. A second manned ship, the J-X Eagle, survives intact a similar reconnaissance mission, except for one of its crew. Cadet Astronaut Katsuo Kanai, almost lost on an EVA maneuver and suffering amnesia shock because of the orb's hypnotic fury. With the information obtained from both space observations, scientists determine the meteor, code-named Gorath and measuring 6,000 times the mass of Earth, is bound on a collision course with the planet. A U.N. appointed commission promptly announces two courses of action: Attempt either a shift of Earth from its orbit or destruction of Gorath in its flight. The former plan is selected, and soon a large scale operation at the South Pole is underway with construction of massive hydrogen gas jets required for the move. But as the meteor plummets earthward, its gravitational pull violently shreds celestial bodies in the vicinity of its path and incites calamities of nature around the Earth, seriously hampering the South Pole progress. Pressure for completion mounts when it is determined only 100 days remain until impact. Scientists, technologists, and operations director Dr. Tazawa are near the breaking point as zero hour approaches; the sight of the threatening red meteor in the daytime sky jolts Katsuo Kanai out of his delirium. At the crucial moment, with the gas jets at full throttle, the Earth slowly moves out of orbit, and Gorath flames on into space in search of other prey. The people of a once-doomed planet are rejoicing, praying—and united. Still, another monumental chore awaits: Moving planet Earth back to its original trajectory. Mankind has attained the impossible once; the second time is just as conceivable.

The plot of *Toho International's GORATH* (1962) smacks of a Japanese *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* (U.S., 1951), but beyond the basic premise of an imminent planetary collision, the two films bear little resemblance. Perhaps a more bonafide comparison can be made with *Daiel's* color production, *WARNING FROM SPACE* (1956), which attempted to portray a similar saga, but surprisingly, visitors from space advise us of the method to save the Earth. *GORATH*'s screenplay, however, is based upon one of several short stories penned by a former Japanese Air Force pilot, Jojiro Okami, whose writing laid the groundwork for three other *Toho* SF pictures, *THE MYSTERIANS*, *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE*, and *DOGORA, THE SPACE MONSTER*. That stock science fiction plot elements exist in *GORATH* cannot be disputed, but unlike its U.S. counterparts from the Fifties and Sixties, the script links the distinguished scientist, heroic rocket crew, crusty military general, and romantic interest, amid their common goal of survival, in a most logical fashion, albeit one decidedly Japanese. This Japanese temperament is the type of thing which American audiences tend to misunderstand and generally disparage due to difficulties in translation and determined Western prejudices.

Ishiro Honda, director of *GORATH*, right. Below, bulky space craft interiors, a zero gravity simulator, and the J-X Hawk model, all designs of the times





WHAT WALRUS?

Perhaps the most controversial aspect regarding *GORATH* is this country's much discussed but rarely seen segment containing Toho's omega present giant monster, in this case an over sized walrus, played by Haruo Nakajima, the same gentleman in the *Godzilla* suit for the monster's first appearance in 1954. Although it would certainly seem to be a colorful element to the overall film, the grizzly character is nowhere to be found within the U.S. release *Americander* and detracted by the now defunct Benco Pictures Corp. Light can be shed at last upon the mystery.

Magma was the walrus' role in the Orient, although it went unnamed in the picture. As the accompanying stills illustrate, the monster was clearly walrus-like and conformed to the standard towering proportions common among Toho giants. His skin was smooth and gray in color, and the eyes glowed like powerful search beams. Most popular was the walrus' occasional upglide stance allowing the beast the use of its mighty flippers to strike out at the man made obstructions visitating its Antarctic habitat. Magma's cry, however, described as an eerie high pitched squeak, failed to do his massive proportions justice.

The appearance of the walrus in *GORATH* totaled approximately three minutes in duration and roughly the sequence went as follows:

Due to tremendous heat generated by the land jets at the South Polar installation, some of the brain masses there begin to melt away. This releases Magma from a long and icy imprisonment, presenting serious peril to the entire Antarctic operation. As two men enter one of the sub stations for an inspection, a great vibration begins and the top of the structure collapses. This is when Magma makes his entrance, and if the viewer of the U.S. version is aware of this, he can discern a huge flipper coming through the roof. In a long shot the walrus removes his flipper from the



down, and the film cuts to a matte shot of the awe-struck guards looking at Magna who is framed by the hole in the shattered roof. Another long shot has the monster rearing up and moving away from the wreckage. After several live action inserts, Magna is next seen poking its head out from a valley filled with an icy mist. Actors Ryo Ikebe and Takeshi Shimura, having been quickly summoned to the scene of the emergency by Ken Uehara, observe the destruction from a jet-powered hovercraft. Finding Magna at the bottom of the deep glacial ravine, the three men immediately take advantage of the situation and proceed to blast at the receding slopes with the aircraft's laser weapon. Searing rays create a massive avalanche which cascades onto the giant beast, covering it with tons of ice, snow, and rock. Thinking the walrus dead, the men send and search for the body, but Magna breaks free from the rubble, and in a matte shot the monster's head is shown limning the edge of the escarpment as the men scamper back to their ship in hasty retreat. Once in the air, the men again let loose the laser, this time scoring a direct hit which kills the behemoth. The plane then passes over the walrus' dead and bleeding carcass. This final scene is in the U.S. print and can be seen upon careful inspection.

The giant walrus episode certainly seemed harmless enough, following a tradition set by monstrous menaces in previous Toho films. The people at Brenco Pictures, who had affectionately nicknamed the beast Wally the Walrus, thought differently, a result of the creature's design, lack of surface texture, and inaccurate animal movement.

Finally, it was the intention of Brenco to retain the sequence intact. Realizing the problem it was up against, however, Brenco attempted to doctor the footage in several ways with the hope of minimizing the inherent humor of the walrus. One method involved disguising Magna behind a fog created artificially in an optical printer. Also, the monster's harmless sheeks were removed to be substituted by Rodan's cackling. All in all, everything short of censure bars across the walrus' eyes was used to diminish the comical tone of the beast's appearance.

Several release prints were subsequently struck to test audience reaction with the walrus scenes retained, though in their resuscitated state it was at this point that Brenco backed off on plans to keep the sequence as it was found to draw more chuckles than gags. Last-minute editing removed all shots of Magna from the negative, and the script was revised to delete any reference to the monster in the dialogue. When the official release finally materialized, all that remained of the segment was a puzzling effort on the part of three scripters to shoot a laser into a dark ravine with nary a walrus in sight, almost.

Hartung Enterprises, presently distributor of the film to U.S. television stations, is aware of the plight of Magna, but indicated it was not prepared to tackle the job of re-establishing the creature's place in the film.

Scenes of a giant walrus, left, were excised from U.S. release. Ken Ishii, composer of *GORATH*'s score, right, and an example of his arrangements sustained by its own effect, below.



A mechanized miniature of the walrus was intercut with a man-in-suit creature. Note wires to the left.

THE SCORE

Kan Ishii's score for *GORATH* is low key when compared to Akira Ifukube's compositions for Ishii's films *THE MYSTERIES* and *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE*, both predecessors of *GORATH*. It is then puzzling why Toho chose *GORATH*, from all pictures in this period, to produce with the added dimension of their stereophonic *Perspecta Sound* process. A score with greater emphasis and style could certainly have made better use of the technical benefits offered in a multi channel presentation.

Owing to the subtle mixing of the music within the balance of the soundtrack, it is difficult for the listener to readily identify or isolate the motifs/musical themes that carry the bulk of the movie's action. Composer Ishii was fortunate, however, in that his orchestration did not allow these themes to be chattered among counter-pointing harmonies involving special accompaniments. Rather, by utilizing a heavy brass section combined directly with a lower string section, the melodic arrangement sustained itself through its own effect. One of the few themes that does reach the listener as a result of this technique is shown in the artwork on the page.

As with most other Japanese composers who have been heavily influenced by Western musical trends, the works of Kan Ishii are well-romanticized in the Old World tradition. It is unusual, then, that romantic composers such as Ishii and Ifukube have excused the modern avant-garde intellectual approach in preference to their own folk based writing composed from the heart rather than from the head.

The *GORATH* score shows evidence of this in the occasional use of the solo viola, a low-stringed violin normally used to create a sad and melancholy background. The absence of most percussive and woodwind instruments in the orchestra also serves to take the bite out of the musical edge, leaving a slightly mellowed flavor even during the more tense moments of the pallid, in-companions with its peers, the work is a slightly ill-suited one, as serene without the pompous coquetry of Ifukube, melodramatic without the concreteness of Sato, and contemporary without the brashness of Miyazaki or Fukuda. The problem with the *GORATH* score, then, is that it does not comply with the demands of the visual component. The lowkey melancholic orchestrations are the last thing for which the film is remembered.

Born in Tokyo in 1921, Ishii received his musical exposure through his father, Bakus Ishii, himself a master in contemporary choreography and likewise heavily influenced by Western trends. After receiving formal training under Iwao Iguchi at the Musashino Academy of Music, Ishii left for Germany in 1952 to study composing and conducting under Karl Wolfe. Since his return to Japan in 1954, he has been active in both conducting and composing and is currently professor of music composition at the Toho Gakuen University. His many works, including *Song of a Whistled Bird* and *The Sun, Birth of a Human Being*, *Sinfonia Ama*, and *Kao*, have drawn acclaim from his countrymen as well as from circles abroad. In 1962 Ishii's work was to culminate in a collaboration with the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre, giving the world his monumental *Macbeth* ballet score.

One can only speculate why Kan Ishii was chosen to write for *GORATH*. Perhaps it was a result of the international fervor generated by Mariano which led to his contract with Toho. What does bear weight in the final analysis is that Ishii has not done another motion picture score since.



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CAST & CREDITS

Through few actors from *GOONAH* are present in the photo below, the still is of interest in that it illustrates a tradition at *Tsubo* of producing a "Memorial Photo" upon completion of filming a picture. The key to the still of the more important personnel is as follows: 7. Masaharu Matsukaze, assistant director; holding clipboard 2. Seisaku Matsukaze, production manager 3. Masahiro Kubo, director 4. Koh Matsukaze ("Shanda") & Sosai Benimatsu ("Gibson") holding clipboard 5. Toshiro Mifune, director 6. George Formes "P" (Purveson) 7. Tokuo Takahashi, lighting 10. Teruaki Abe, art director 11. Toshiya Sato, sound recording 12. Hajime Komatsu, director of photography 13. Shigeo Aizawa, assistant director.



INTO ENGLISH

Americanization of a foreign import can amount to an experience nothing short of a nightmare, as many U.S. production supervisors will testify, and *GORATH* proved no exception.

The altered version of *GORATH*, which eventually found its way into theaters on this side of the Pacific was tied up with over one year in post-production work here, specifically from late 1962 when it was purchased until completion in mid-1964. This rather lengthy period of time included a number of pre-release test screenings for both public and media only audiences that served to determine the film's final cut. Regardless of these cautious and time-consuming maneuvers, the picture as released failed to attain its potential.

The English-language dubbing, directed by Ryder Sound Services, is from a John Lucas script, a name familiar to *STAR TREK* followers. Though the dubbed dialogue is reasonably credible and an adequate degree of lip-sync is maintained, sometimes quite precariously due to the de-emphasized lip movement common to Japanese acting, it becomes apparent that the new voices for the Japanese actors sound alike. Only four Americans were used to breathe life into the muted Japanese lips. There also appears to have been little conscious effort to have the dubbers use Oriental accents. Add a defect in the Lucas script which rarely bestows names upon any of the screen characters, and the sum is a series of people with a dismal lack of definition.

Surprisingly, all the non-Japanese actors speak English in the original film and are subtitled whenever they say their lines. For some reason, the voices were dubbed for the U.S. version.

Americanization meant a lot more than language transplanting. The revised U.S. script called for considerable editing, incorporating several scene deletions and additions. Besides the excised "giant walkus" sequence already discussed, much other footage was judged unsatisfactory for American audiences and thus was omitted. In a few instances, celluloid surgery was unavoidable. Case in point: A sequence wherein the astronaut cadets of the *JX Hawk* bid adieu to their departing comrades was originally followed by a military song, given vocal credence by the now-aeronautic cadets. The lyrics gave testimony to the young astronauts' patriotic allegiance to their homeland and undying courage in the face of various interplanetary calamities. There can be little doubt why this interlude was removed. Also omitted with little regard for the personnel who sweated over the filming was the entire bulk of the Japanese production credits and cast listing, replaced by a simple five line title card.

The Japanese film opens with its credits and fatty rice theme music, both missing on the U.S. print. The story begins as two women are driving along a highway and stop just outside a tunnel. Both are suddenly startled, not by a thunderstorm as in Brecon's release, but by the nearby blast off of the *JX Hawk* spaceship. Just before the *Hawk* is destroyed in the first reel, the crew all let out a "Banzai!" which is not in the English print.

Most of the scenes specifically shot for American viewing can be discovered during the first reel where introductory narration is illustrated by several dissolves through star

Right: The detailed miniature work which makes believable the incredible events occurring in Isho's 1962 film, *GORATH*. U.S. distributor Brenco Pictures Corp., feeling the effects subdue, optically superimposed a layer of drifting fog over much of effects director Kuburaya's footage.



Japanese
sci-fi film with
exploitation
possibilities for
general market.

Exploitation potential of this Japanese-made sci-fi is considerable, pegged on pic's subject of a giant celestial body hurtling toward Earth and certain destruction of our own planet. Japanese producers in the past have displayed great ingenuity along this line of scientific speculation, and *GORATH*, name of the approaching farming object, lends certain credence. Special effects are particularly interesting, but the story itself is possibly too scientific for popular reception and envelope is left in constant state of wonderment except for avoidable portions.

Its short length makes it a hardly entry in most theaters, but there is need of sharp editing, particularly in its opening, which for some reason concentrates on shots of the various constellations and a lecture on lens, on astronomy and movement of the heavens.

Names of Japanese thespians are unknown in this country, but, turn in very creditable performances, particularly Ryo Ichise, the essential most responsible for saving the Earth. Particular credit goes to Iki Yukawa for his spectacular special effects, and boasting Hisao's direction catches the spirit of the *Takeshi Kurosawa* screenplay. Color photography by Hayao Nakamura is another strong asset, as is Ryo Ichise's mood music. Reprinted from *Variety*. May 20, 1964.



怪星激突の危機迫る！ 地球の軌道脱出なるか



GORATH

上河西佐小田志太ニジ日佐平白水大池

原津村々沢崎村刀瓶シ・原田川野保部

内谷清木栄川正ネネ健昭由久

多羅三孝太

謙郎晃丸郎潤喬寛典支ト三彦美美明良

二郎



charts, foretells of the impending cosmic disasters. Though not in the Japanese version, the material does succeed as part of the whole.

However, an unforgivable travesty was committed on a number of special effects scenes appearing in the destruction episode at the movie's climax. Breenco had little respect for the miniature work so it attempted to disguise the "blunders" exposed fact. Through dint of all the purpose optical printer, a dense layer of drifting fog was superimposed over the footage, and the light intensity was diminished. The resulting effect renders a good portion of the highly detailed miniatures as vague set pieces.

Breenco made several additional modifications to GORATH which are worth mentioning. The meteor does not make any noise as it travels through space in Ishii's original, but for the U.S. market a shrill noise was added. Also, the destruction of the moon at the beginning of GORATH's advance on Earth originally occurred at the conclusion of the film, while Breenco scheduled the destruction just prior to Earth's escape from the collision with the planetary body.

Although GORATH's Japanese version featured a process called Perspecto Sound which utilized a pseudo-stereo technique, the U.S. version was issued with a monaural track, in spite of the claim to one in stereo contained in some advertising material. Writers in Breenco's publicity department were either guilty of stretching the truth or confused by the concept of stereo, which in that period was still somewhat in its infancy. Further misrepresentation may be noted on advertising for an earlier Breenco release, *Toku's THE HUMAN VAPOR*.

The persons behind the tampering were the late Edward L. Alspach, Sr. (producer of *INWADERS FROM MARS*) and Stanley D. Meyer, directors of Breenco Pictures Corporation of Los Angeles. Fortunately, these gentlemen took sufficient interest in the Toho product to purchase three of their films for release in America, the third project being *THE LAST*

Special visual effects director, the late Eiji Tsuburaya, right. Eiji, above, at work. Eiji, and in what appears to be a moment of contemplation for GORATH's harnessed effects man.

WAR, forming their own small film company in the process. The odds are against success for newly formed firms in the film industry, and such was Breenco's fate. It closed its doors in 1969.

Repeatedly, most of the company's distribution deals were directed as a haphazard manner. A contract was drawn up with one south of the border picture outlet, but even that unceremoniously bit the dust. The result was that GORATH, along with the remainder of the Breenco distributed films, was seen at only a scant few theatrical bookings in the southern and western United States, making the titles generally unknown elsewhere. A possible explanation for the fumbling can be traced back to a rift that was developing between the Alspach-Meyer partnership which left corporate control in a sorely misguided state. Even a release of GORATH in 1968, paired with *THE HUMAN VAPOR*, failed to stir up enough interest to draw the company back to its feet.

Finally, the firm was dismantled after the death of Alspach on July 3, 1969, with Meyer taking all of the Breenco film properties with him. Needless to say, a profit was never turned on Breenco's original investment, leaving former employees with bitter memories of the entire fiasco.

After a few years, GORATH and other Breenco releases were picked up by Heritage Enterprises for distribution to tele-

vision in the U.S. with the conversion from Toho's anamorphic format to the comparably minuscule television tube. Much of GORATH's original scope is lost, but apparently more viewers are seeing the motion picture now on TV than through the earlier theatrical releases, which may be the only encouraging news ever offered for this film in America.

The author wishes to extend his gratitude to the following for their generous assistance and cooperation:

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TATSUNOKO PRODUCTION

TELEVISION ANIMATION

This article continues the Tatsunoko filmography initiated last issue. If the reader remembers, six superhero/robot programs were synopsized, making evident the programming Tatsunoko created to appease the voracious Japanese appetite for that portion of the genre. The series presented herein are as varied as the last group was not—and are most representative of Tatsunoko's catalog.

PAUL'S MIRACULOUS ADVENTURE

When his friend Nisa is kidnapped by Belpean, the demonic ruler of another world, Paul undertakes a risky expedition to rescue his playmate. The young boy is aided by Paikon, a plush doll with magic powers. Together they plunge into Belpean's dimension of living toys where both are beset by difficulties as well as a variety of delightful wonders. (50 thirty minute episodes, October 3, 1976-September 11, 1977)

THE GENIE FAMILY

Three Arabian genies reside in an old jar. Asneez will bring forth Hassho, a yawn summoner; Ya-ahn, a hiccup calls out Eppuh. Once out of their domicile, they must grant wishes to whomever released them, until an inadvertent sneeze, yawn, or hiccup sends them back. Discovery of the jar in a modern residential neighborhood proves to be a mixed blessing to the new owner. Hassho's clumsy attempts to obey his master's wishes result in disaster, and mischievous Ya-ahn twists the wishes in ways her master would never have dreamed. (104 fifteen minute episodes, October 5, 1969-September 27, 1970) HAKUSHAN, the Japanese title of the series, and the father genie's original name, is supposed to be the phonetic spelling of a sneeze.

HYPO AND THOMAS

Thomas, a cunning bird, sponges off a good natured hippopotamus named Hypo. Though Thomas shares a symbiotic relationship with Hypo, living in the beast's mouth, he always tries to outsmart and lord it over his host. Their friendship and cooperation endures despite the frequent quargs. (100 three minute episodes, January 1, 1971-September 30, 1972)

TAMAGON THE COUNSELOR

Tamagon, a lovable monster, acts as advisor to those in trouble, asking only eggs in payment; he goes to work after devouring his fee. Despite his schemes, Tamagon's service usually ends in total failure whereupon he winds up being chased by his rate clients. (103 three minute episodes, October 5, 1972-September 24, 1973)

TEMPLE THE BALLOONIST

A little girl named Temple, who is deeply fond of music, happens to boast a balloon one day. She is excited by her aerial journey until the lighter-than-air craft begins drifting away from her parents and home. Eventually, Temple encounters a dinem

mer boy and his animal friends, musicians all, who play their music to keep up the girl's spirits. The entourage then sets out with Temple to help her find her way home. (26 thirty minute episodes, October 1, 1977-March 25, 1978)

THE ADVENTURES OF HUTCH THE HONEYBEE

Hutch, a young honeybee, becomes a solitary wanderer after his hive home is destroyed by invading wasps. He ventures into the world to search for his mother whom he has never seen. During his travels, he experiences much bitterness and sorrow, yet gradually he also learns of love, friendship, courage, and other virtues which make life worthwhile. (First series: 91 thirty minute episodes, April 7, 1970-December 28, 1971; Second series: 26 thirty minute episodes, April 5, 1974-September 27, 1974) Original title: HUTCH (or HACHI) THE HONEYBEE

JUDO BOY

When a youth, endowed with impressive athletic ability, is left alone upon his father's sudden death, he faces many hardships in his quest to find a new life for himself. Eventually, the boy is successful thanks to a determination and willingness to work hard. (26 thirty minute episodes, April 2, 1969-September 24, 1969)

BELFY AND LILLIBIT

In a Lilliputian society hidden within a forest lives Belfy, a witty, rompish girl who lost her parents in infancy. She resides with an uncle, the only doctor in the woods, whose habit of drunkenness bothers the little sprite, so Belfy doesn't mind woods in trying to keep the man under control. Belfy has a friend in Lillibit, a boy with a large streak of curiosity, and the two share adventures with some of the animals of the forest. The tales of the miniature community are lessons in human relationships and a respect for nature. (26 thirty minute episodes, January 7, 1980-June 30, 1980)

THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO

Pinocchio, the wooden mannequin of Collodi's classic, is given new life by the Blue Fairy, yet as a living toy he is faced with alienation and abuse rather than acceptance by humans. Despite his frustrating intrigues, Pinocchio is constantly encouraged by the love of the Blue Fairy and the faith of old Geppetto, the wood carver who made him, as he persists in his efforts of becoming a human boy. (42 thirty minute episodes, January 4, 1972-December 26, 1972) Original title: MDCK, THE OAK PUPPET. Two episodes from the series were released theatrically in Japan by Toho KASHINOKI MOKKU, scripted by Fujiyama Junnosuke in March 21, 1975, and KASHINOKI MOKKU—BOKU WA NAKANAKI, scripted by Kyoshi Sakai, in July 22, 1972. Both 25 minute shorts were directed by Ippen Mori and produced by Kenji Toshida.

DEMETAN CROAKER, THE FROG BOY

Though Demetan's family is so poor it is unable to send him to school in his woodland pond community,



TEMPLE AND CROAKER



SPEED RACER



BELFY AND LILLIBIT



PRODUCTIONS

IN FROM THE SEAHORSE

by Fred Patten



TAMAGON THE COURSEKEEPER



HYPO AND THIMAS



WENDELLE THE KALEIDONIAN



FRONCON

he has a friend in Ranstan, the daughter of the pond's rich ruler, a man incited by this relationship which he seeks to break up. Nevertheless, the young frogs continue to love with courage and confidence, and also guide the heartless leopard frog to an understanding of justice and generosity. Gradually, the community responds to the couple's smooch and joins them in a goal for a brighter future. (39 thirty minute episodes, January 2, 1973-September 25, 1973)

SPEED RACER

Only in his teens, Speed Racer drives a very special automobile, the Mach 5, in races throughout the world. Designed by his father, a retired professional racer, the car is equipped with features which enable Speed to drive over difficult terrain and through all manner of obstacles. The youth uses the devices frequently since he is often in competition with unscrupulous drivers backed by international criminals. Speed and his pit crew, girlfriend, three, kid brother Spritle, and Spritle's pet chimp, Chum-chum, brave fast-paced escapades in exotic settings around the globe, proving that quick wits and fair play are always sure winners. (52 thirty minute episodes, April 2, 1967-March 31, 1968). Original title: MACH, GO! GO! GO! The words GO! GO! GO! are used both in the American sense of cheering on a favorite and in the Japanese sense of the word live, hence Speed's Mach Five racer.

Tatsunoko Productions is in a unique situation in that the studio apparently owns three time slots on Japanese TV. When a series is concluded a new one begins in the same time slot the next week to keep it filled. Tatsunoko's GATCHAMAN II was followed immediately by GATCHAMAN-F which was directly followed by MUTENING (Sunday, 6:00-6:30 p.m.), GORDIAN was succeeded by GOLDLIGHTEN (Thursday, this changed from an original time slot of 7:30-8:00 a.m. to 6:30-7:00 p.m.). The Time Bokan shows have followed one another consecutively (Saturday, 6:30-7:00 p.m.).

The original TIME BOKAN program was such a success that when Tatsunoko felt the concept had run its course, a new show was created using lookalike characters with new names, costumes, and a slightly different time travel gimmick. Merchandising opportunities were probably also a consideration.

An explanation of the Time Bokan name may be found in the translation of the Japanese word *bokan*, which is a sound effect for an explosion, like "wham" or "boom." Time Bokan could therefore be considered a humorous play on Time Bomb, especially since all entries involve traveling through time. The action centers on two groups which travel to different periods of the past, the teenage boy and girl heroes and the sexy villainess and her two kiddy stooges. What they do in the past depends upon the premise of the programs: observe the past, try to change the past, attempt to steal treasures from the past, and so on.

The shows in the series so far are: TIME BOKAN (December 4, 1975-December 25, 1976), YATAMAN (January 1, 1977-January 27, 1979), ZENDAMAN (February 3, 1979-January 26, 1980), OTASUKEMAN (February 2, 1980-January 31, 1981), YATODEMAN (February 7, 1981-February 6, 1982), IPPATSUMAN (February 13, 1982-?). Next in the series will be TADAKIMAN ■



THE GENE FAMILY



PAUL'S MIRACULOUS ADVENTURE



the toho legacy

IN THE FINAL CHAPTER OF MYTH, MONSTERS, AND MYOPIA THE TOHO FANTASY IMAGE FADES TO BLAH.

Under scrutiny in this final installment of *IFC*'s multi-section, chronological film history of Toho International is the period from 1970 through 1979. The preservation of the studio as leader of the genre is at stake.

Allocating most of its resources to fantasy, sci, and horror in the first half of the Seventies, Toho earmarked a large percentage of those resources for giant monster fare, the studio issuing a new title each of the decade's first six years, five of which premiered consecutive releases starring Godzilla. The reptile's most-favored status soured, and the veteran was forced to retire in 1975, in spite of mutterings from studio executives to the contrary. It was reassuring to note Ishiro Honda's return in the final Godzilla color feature some 21 years after the director's *GOJIRA* first attacked the screen in black and white.

Not all of Toho's money was invested in monster stock. The studio resurrected the European myth of vampire and werewolf with some artistic and financial

success. There was also a nod toward the disaster category of movies and even a genuflexion to *STAR WARS*, but Toho's space opera failed dismally to emulate the impact of its progenitor while the studio's first epic *disaster* release went on to become an unmitigated winner aesthetically surpassing the later American works.

Genre movie activity at Toho waned as the decade elapsed. Escalating production budgets due to inflated special effects prices and increased studio time were taking their toll. And Toho, never a firm to diverge far from its methodical approach to filmmaking, failed to realize that audiences were weary of the repetitive stories and atrophied effects techniques. As a result, their pictures were becoming too expensive to produce for a selected foreign and domestic market which was diminishing. The result: The final decade of Toho's domination of the Japanese fantasy, sci, and horror film scene appeared to be at hand.

Article by Greg Shoemaker



Shin Kishida as *The Man Who Resembles A Shadow* in scenes taken from the finale of *THE BLOOD-THIRSTY EYES* (1971), retitled *LAKE OF DRACULA* for export and the second of three films Ishiro Honda directed with Eiji Tsuburaya. Only this photograph of Toho's villain was original for the picture when sold to UPA for a U.S. TV release. The Japanese folkloric basis for the vampire's makeup belies the Western approach of the film.

the thriller

It was in 1970 when the Japanese horror film surfaced in modern dress through the eyes of director Michio Yamamoto. His brand of suspense was unfortunately ingrained on only four pictures, the first of which, *TERROR IN THE STREETS*, was a tense and briskly-paced thriller sprinkled with a number of psychological shocks.

TERROR's screenplay spotlights a woman who finds herself totally disoriented when everyone she knows—relatives, boyfriend, friends—claims never to have seen her before. The resolution reveals the deception as a plan to dew the woman's essence.

The success of his first movie enabled Yamamoto to make *THE BLOODYTHIRSTY DOLL* (1970), which was succeeded by *THE BLOODYTHIRSTY EYES* (1971) and *THE BLOODYTHIRSTY ROSE* (1974), a trio of vampire movies. The few American reviewers of these horror entries were quick to praise the director's economic approach to storytelling, "the master's economy," said Howard Thompson of the *New York Times* in a comparison he made to the late Alfred Hitchcock.

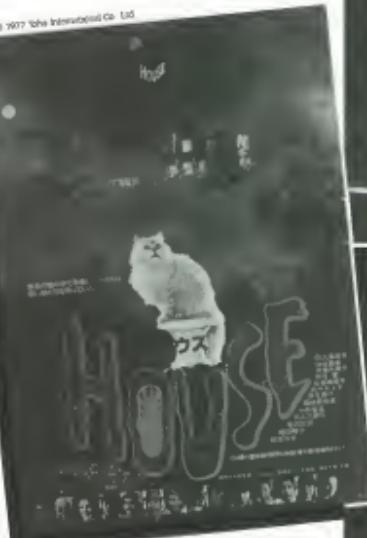
THE BLOODYTHIRSTY DOLL, listed in English promotional material from Toho as *THE VAMPIRE DOLL*, involves a missing male, his dead lover, and the man's sister who decides to visit the dead woman's home. The meeting commences an unleashing of strange and startling events when the living encounter the undead.

Reviewer Thompson made what could be considered a continuance of his earlier Yamamoto/Hitchcock analogy in his review for *VAMPIRE DOLL*, "Yamamoto tells his grisly



Art © 1977 Toho International Co., Ltd.

Ho



Poster art, above, for *HOUSE*, an offbeat horror entry in which the furnishings of the mansion chow down on its guests. Shin Kishida, portraying a vampire, above right, attacks Choi Takabashi who is attempting a rescue of a woman in the clutches of the monster, from *LAKE OF DRACULA*. Yoko Kubreyoshi, inset, as a vampiress with a predilection for doll collecting in *THE VAMPIRE DOLL*. Right, in *HORROR OF THE WOLF* the lead character, pictured far right, is a wolf capable of changing into human form.

story with a cool, taciturn detachment. Don't be fooled by what seems a conventional staging. There is plenty lurking around the bend, some of it hair-raising.

The struggle between illusion and reality, a recurring theme in the Japanese director's repertoire, is examined in the best horror films. According to Gavyn Bartholomew in *Cinefantastique*, THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES, also known as LAKE OF DRACULA and released in 1980 to American television by UPN, deals earnestly with this interplay in which a young girl, saved by an old man's intervention from an attack by a vampire, finds the event treated as a dream by her friends. Some 10 years later, Akiko still insures the near-fatal meeting occurred, obsessed by a dreadful golden eye which haunts even her dreams. Eventually the experience is proven real, the woman, mortally wishing it indeed were all a dream. The demented has Akiko's lover, a doctor, using hypnosis to expose the vampire thrice, itself defined by the physician as a "hypnotic phenomenon."

In this review of LAKE OF DRACULA, in *FFJ*, Horacio Higuchi credits Sennōtō with investing the story of the vampire with new life and focus, a statement easily applied as well to the other pictures in the trilogy. LANG's scenario, for example, deliberately ignores the good/evil dichotomy, and sexual overtones are confusing (the vampire indifferently hates either sex). The imaginative use of mythic elements is evident in the reference to the property of non-reflection, from the sequence in which the viewer witnesses Akiko, separated in a closet for protection, being felled by a blank mirror into leaving the sanctuary, only to be pounced upon by the waiting vampires.

The vampire character, appearing in the second and third film of the series, is portrayed in pasty white makeup, conjuring up a Japanese folkloric onryō, and wearing gold-colored contact lenses, the vampires of THE BLOODTHIRSTY OGL and THE BLOODTHIRSTY ROSE his female counterpart in appearance. Apart from the makeup, the Sennōtō films are virtually not Japanese at all, offering instead a markedly Western influence in their approach, characters, and the characters' personal relationships.

Actor Shin Ichiba essays the vampire role, but the name Dracula is used only for the movies' international promotion. The embodiment of evil that Ichiba portrays is called Kage no nite Oni-ō or, the Man Who Resembles A Shadow, an obscure reference to the elusiveness of the beast.

Elusiveness applies as well to the bloodsucker's survival in motion pictures, as was proven by Universal and Hammer. Thus the Shadow Man is offered a reprieve from an assumed demise in THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES to instigate his pestilence three years later in THE BLOODTHIRSTY ROSE, titled EVIL OF DRACULA for sales overseas. Here, a vampire and waitress open a girls' school to parasite of the students as a source of nourishment. The fate of the antagonists is determined by a psychology professor employed at the school. He stabs a red hot poker through their hearts, laying to rest once and for all Toho's vampires and Mucho Yamamoto's fantasy career.

That same year, 1974, saw the release of another convention of the horror cinema, the *werewolf*. In HORROR (MARK) OF THE WOLF, the film, instead it would seem to American international motion pictures from the Fifties which were set among a society of teenagers, featured a shape shifter who was wolf first, human second. Pity the paranoid Larry Talbot who thought his lupine form was the aberration, when all along it might have been the other way around.

In Toho's movie, a hood-like, lone-wolf disciplinary case befriends a young female instructor at his school. Threatened by violent factions at this institution, both develop a strange relationship, the teacher becoming aware of the youth's woes when he comes to her aid during a series of attacks by local goons. The boy mauls to death the gang leaders and eventually is forced to run with a pack of real wolves.

Three years later in 1977 HOUSE was released, a variation on Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* by Nobuhiko Obayashi. For it donned the hats of producer and director of both the live action and the visual effects. Formerly a director of television commercials, Obayashi, in his first feature assignment, led seven young women on

a summer holiday to a mansion where the guests disappear one by one via living, devouring, home furnishings.

Many points of the production are striking: an actress with a slow, exaggerated stride, her hair and scarf blown about by a breeze which affects no one near her, mass-produced food names used as nicknames for several of the victims, the coordination of color between the costumes of the players and the definitely unnatural pastel-tinted environment. In viewing those moments and others, Bal in *Horror* offers the possibility that HOUSE might be Obayashi's indictment of the excesses of Japanese commercialism. The director's task is to draw attention to his cleverness, but is he kidding? Is the dialogue banal purposely like so much ad copy? Is the intrusive music performed by the pop rock group Godiego calculated or accidental? Obayashi's debut is a puzzling one, to which Bal adds "Obayashi is either a brilliant conscious satirist or a belligerent unconscious satirist."

Discussion of Toho's, humor, and fantasy would not be complete without inclusion of the murder mystery thriller, a type of film, introduced in 1976, which received an enthusiastic response from the Japanese movie-going public. The movies generally featured murders in the present occurring in settings of suggested supernatural evil linked with the past, with the real murderer and a proper explanation for the bizarre proceedings disclosed in the final act. Several studios toyed with the formula after Toho's initial entry turned into gold at the box office, but Toho by far produced the largest number of films. By 1980, however, the love affair with these titillating works would turn cold.

The film behind all the furor was the INUGAMITS, director Kei Ichikawa's stylish retelling of strange murders based on the best-selling novel by the famous Japanese mystery author Seishi Yokomizo, whose many works were selected to follow the successful lead of the INUGAMITS. Intent to continue this propitious arrangement, director Ichikawa was teamed with the writings of Yokomizo for four additional productions: ISLAND OF TERROR and OCEAN'S NURSE'S SONG, both from 1977; QUEEN BEE in 1978, and HOUSE OF HANGING in 1979. Yokomizo's stories narrated the exploits of a dandified rickshaw detective gathed in gear from Japan's past, an intended rumpled appearance of the eccentric, not unlike Peter Falk's Fabulous Columbo character.

Actor Susumu Kuroda's MURDER IN THE GOLF HOUSE, released in 1979, approximates the popular Ichikawa/Yokomizo efforts in style and content. A 300-year vendetta acts as a background to a tale in which a doll, possibly motivated by a curse, may be the actual murderer.

Not unlike the preceding mystery titils, a masquerade plays an important role in Toho's 1979 film HAUNTED GOLD in which criminals, to keep intruders from locating their buried gold, create the deception that the swamp in which the booty is stashed is haunted by a female ghost. It requires sanguine detective Itami. Hence, played by Katsu Shirato of *Zatoichi* fame, to foil the gamblers.

The invasion by an alien life form of the body of an industrial spy, right, played by Keiji Sakai in YOG—MONSTER FROM SPACE, forces him to set a fire in a cave to kill off the bats inhabiting it, for their high pitched squeal strangely affects the giant monsters also controlled by the space life. Effect achieved by cel animation.

monster monroe

A menace is a pain in the butt, a nuisance, and it can be a threat to the survival of its own kind. The latter precisely describes most of the decade's creature features, especially the first, SPACE ANCEBA, which in augurated the Seventies and was issued amid an atmosphere of peace, love, and rock 'n' roll, an atmosphere social responsibility and of film which reflected that attitude. YOG—MONSTER FROM SPACE, as the film was issued in the U.S., was an anachronism to a time 25 years gone in its tale of space spores attached to a space ship returning to Earth and the giant monsters generated from the infestation of a turtle, a crab, and a squid by the hitchhikers.

An industrial spy, also inhabited by the spores, acts in concert with the gods/aliens to make easy their access to world domination. After wiping out some island's beach front property, terrorizing the locals, and engaging in the ethereal monster versus monster combat, the creatures, and thus the space threat, meet their end when a volcano finishes off the last of the beasts as well as the spy, who realizes the damage his schizophrenia has caused and has jumped into the fiery bowels of Earth.

YOG's visual effects were under the command of Sadamasa Anzawa, debuting as replacement for the late Eiji Tsuburaya. His past created effects assignments included co-director with Eiji on such productions as SON OF GODZILLA, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, and GODZILLA'S REVENGE. Following YOG, Anzawa departed to freelance (e.g., the 1979 Taiwanese production, THE PHOENIX, for Eastern Media, see *FFJ* #12). The uniqueness of the visuals in YOG may have hastened his leaving.

The design of the film's monsters has them dissimilar to the smaller animal life from which they were to have evolved, while the intent to disguise humans as beasts proves laughable here, especially the thrashing limbs not occupied by a human arm or leg. Optical effects, however, are a plus. Matte lines are rarely in evidence and density fluctuations between matted elements are just as scarce. Nicely done are the supered animation sequences of the great squid's tentacle which, having wrapped itself around a native of the island, lifts him skyward at a spear bounces off a helmet for leather monster of a bat swarm, though closeup miniatures of the winged vermin are unrealistic.

Relevancy in Toho's fantasy titles has played an important, if fluctuating, role. Not all titles, YOG for example, have examined the splitting of the atom and its abuse, pollution, bureaucracy, and so on. On the several Toho pictures which



Photo © 1979 Toho International Co., Ltd.

Three giant beasts which were a normal size turtle, crab, and nautilus until overtaken by space spores in TOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE, a 1970 film.

Photo © 1970 Toho International Co. Ltd.



have are stronger dramas for it. GOZILLA VS. HEDORA is such an endeavor.

Hedora, a tadpole-like thing raised in the industrial waste choking a river in Japan, transforms into a giant, ravenous, living pile of filth feeding off the wastes it locates everywhere. Civilization's helplessness is averted by the family arm of Godzilla who, assisted by a scientific device using electricity to dehydrate the pest, sends Hedora to smog monster heaven.

While GOZILLA VS. THE THING only hinted at it, threats to the eco-system are showcased in 1971's GOZILLA VS. HEDORA, retitled GOZILLA VS. THE SMOK MONSTER by American International for the U.S. The movie takes itself and its subject seriously, a kind of ecological CHINA SYNC-DRONE with Godzilla as Jane Fonda. The film presents its case via effective intercutting of the main storyline with pollution footage (smoke belching factories, waste jammed harbors) and satiric editorial cartoon comments.

The weakest element of GOZILLA VS. HEDORA, shoddily directed by Toshimitu Barro, is a youngster as one of the leads, at the time a device used with alarming regularity in Japanese fantasy product. The fact that a child has such a large role is not the dilemma, but the kind of precocious child he is. The young lad, son of a scientist and who is also scientifically inclined, wiles away his time in a Godzilla-inspired never-never land, confident the giant will assist the world in its predicament. Of course, it comes to be, and in the finale the boy, who has cheered Godzilla from afar, waves bye-bye to the receding reptile, not unlike the tyke in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS who befriends the extraterrestrials

Toku's child is a hyperactive, whiney-voiced, imposition Spielberg's youth is a quiet, inquisitive, endearing character. All of Toku's children, in the forefront of the action or not, are similar to Ken in HEDORA and are not very likable.

Teruyoshi Nakano, in his first assignment as effects director, has achieved a caliber of output associated with Eiji Tsuburaya, although miniature work on the Mt. Fuji set, where the final monster confrontation occurs, is devoid of vegetation and distorted geological formation. The barrenness shows the eye to it and detracts from believability. Composer Richard Manzella's fine score occasionally lights the tension of the film with a staccato, squeaky-like farandole for Godzilla which suggests a waddling duck is the hero. The repetition of the theme becomes irritating.

Godzilla treats the audience to a new aspect of his powers heretofore undiscussed in any previous entry. He flees crashing into a bell and directing his radioactive breath earthward, the monster becomes a repulsive version of the English Hover jet. The capability adds a new dimension to the character as it enables Godzilla to outwit Hedora, but the endowment is more amusing than awesome, to see that hulk pick itself up and cruise.

HEDORA features many sequences transpiring at night, adding to the gloom and doom of the unsettling images. The gaudy day glo colors and effects in the four Godzilla titles to come create the atmosphere of a carnival, apposite to their approximation of a midway funhouse ride. GOZILLA VS. HEDORA is a fluke of the Seventies.

GOZILLA VS. GIGAN, which followed in 1971, was picked up in the U.S. as GOZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND by

Cinema Shares International. The firm also purchased for distribution the two succeeding Godzilla releases, GOZILLA VS. MEGALON, produced in 1973, and, from 1974, GOZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA.

In GOZILLA VS. GIGAN a woman fears for the safety of her brother, a computer whiz kidnapped by invaders from Space M in the Hunter Nebula. She and two men are thrown together in an attempt to disenthrall the aliens who occupy the bodies of recently deceased humans and who are planning an invasion of Earth from their base in occultable tower, an enormous structure shaped like the monster and situated amid an amusement park. Godzilla and Anguus are suckered off Monster Island by the aliens who play a recording of a particular signal to draw the monsters to the park, allowing the invaders to set up a kill of the beasts at close range. King Ghidorah and Gigan are likewise summoned, but from space, to help lead the two friendly monsters to their doom. When one of the heroes blows up the tower and the aliens gone, is the control tape, releasing Godzilla and Anguus to defeat the two space creatures.

Japanese genre films generally provide backgrounds on their alien attackers, and GIGAN is no exception. The audience is whisked away on a voyage to the aggressors' planet Earth look-alike frame which is populated by a mutated species shown driving Japanese automobiles. This race polluted its world to the point of killing off its own kind. However, the invaders of GIGAN are a mutated species from the planet which survived to migrate to Earth and there set up shop in the bodies of deceased Terrians. When asked to divulge just what kind of beings they are, a light is thrown on one of the pseudo-humans, and on the wall is cast the shadow of a huge cockroach.

No longer the aeronaut, Godzilla vocalizes in GIGAN, so too Anguus, in guttural intonations, distorted to a point of near unintelligibility by synthesizer. It would have been better if no monster speak was uttered at all. After GIGAN, there wouldn't be.

In a money-saving measure, footage from WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS was incorporated into GIGAN of the master cannon fire which is to seemingly repel an Anguus attack, the first monster skirmish some 40 minutes into the film. Grubby destruction footage from GHIDRAH appears when the King is loosed upon Earth.

GIGAN's cat and mouse game played between heroes and villains, a 90 minute serial of captures and escapes, was directed and co-scripted by Jun Fukuda, who has single-handedly been responsible for nearly mortally wounding the monster film genre on several occasions. He would carry the same credits into the production of GOZILLA VS. MEGALON which retained the name through its American release.

A review of post-published criticism surprisingly indicates that MEGALON struck a favorable chord with reviewers. Even the staid Vincent Canby of the New York Times appears to have been smitten with the movie. In his critique he notes Godzilla's transformation from villain to savior. "The dragon has become St. George."

Gigan returns to assist the insect-like Megalon who is



protector of the lost race of Sesropis, an ancient civilization below the surface, in *GOZOZILLA VS. MEGALON*. Under ground nuclear testing is rocking the very foundation of the city, so it sends the beast to make war on the surface people. A robot jet jaguar, stolen by agents from below, grows to enormous size but turns instead to fight alongside Godzilla when he has surrendered from Monster Island. The four-way earthshaking battle levels countryside and city, but Godzilla and the robot are victorious. Godzilla heads back home, and jet jaguar reverts to normal size and returns to his human creators.

Bird-like Gigan, a mixture of flesh and machine who appears in both *GIGAN* and *MEGALON*, has stubby bat wings, a bulbous opaque windshield for eyes, two useless claws, and a Black & Decker circular saw running from chest to abdomen. And Gigan can fire a lethal stream of energy from a point centered on its forehead. Megalon, in its only feature, is a huge, flying insect with power drills in place of hands, and is capable of shooting various rays from a mandible encased mouth and mane like antennae. Jet jaguar, also from *MEGALON*, is a flying flying robot resembling Ultra Seven from the *Tsuburaya* television series. Created in a grey latex suit trimmed in red, blue, and yellow, the auto malon, normally standing the average human height, can balloon to the skyscraper scale of any monster in sight. No matter how nifty the robot is, it and the other new creatures are pure nonsense. For good or bad that is the direction the Godzilla films were being led, and the chart actuates the niche.

Special effects director Toshiyuki Nakanishi, involved with *GIGAN*, *MEGALON*, and the final Godzilla titles, is at his best when required to deliver cartoon animated rays and force fields and spectacular pyrotechnics. With few exceptions, he's at his worst when asked to produce miniatures, latex creatures, and visual effects photography. This area of weakness, unfortunately, is the heart of the product. After Nakanishi's line start with *GOZOZILLA VS. HEDORA*, his cut puts them erratic and is generally a detrimental aspect to these films.

There also is a problem with all the new faces prominently displayed in the monster films of the Seventies. Unlike the Toho entries in the Fifties and Sixties, the third decades set a new policy of casting different unknowns, unknown at least to the genre, in each new production, though occasionally Toho would break the pattern by using actor Akira Ifukube Hirata in two key roles in *GOZOZILLA VS. MEGAGODZILLA* and *TERROR OF MEGAGODZILLA* and Akira Kubo, Toshio Yachida, and Keiji Sahara in *YOG*. The new personnel, however, appear lacking in the depth of their acting ability, amateurish, if you will. But the blase may be shared with the scripts for seldom is the viewer allowed to explore the characters on the screen, since the players deliver little except to expound plot action and court disaster.

The final two Godzilla entries star a remarkable machine monster called Mechagodzilla. It is a metallic twin of the superstar from Monster Island, a veritable tank on two legs, with the capability of flight and of discharging rockets from its fingers and lethal rays from inverting red eyes. Spinning its head at incredible revolutions per minute, Mechagodzilla



is able to whip up an impenetrable protective force field.

Constructed of Space Titanium, the dynamic machine, in its first film outing, *GOZOZILLA VS. MEGAGODZILLA*, is under the control of space invaders and has been programmed to become a Godzilla double in the film's initial sequences. Its destructive ferocity is displayed with a design toward disgracing the good image of the flesh and blood version. The robot malfunctions in a match with the real Godzilla, and its exterior abruptly transforms from a scaly hide to one of gleaming metal before seeking repart in an Okinawan cave, secret base of the aliens. Mechagodzilla is serviced with the aid of a kidnapped professor portrayed by Akira Ifukube, the only recognizable talent of the cast and creator of the oxygen destroyer in *GOJIRA*, and off the robot goes in search of its quarry. Meanwhile, an Okinawan legend, prophesying the return of a lion-monster when the island's residents are beset by danger, is fulfilled by the emergence of King Seesar who joins Godzilla in battle and in victory as a team. The aliens are routed and revealed to be ape creatures beneath a human exterior.

King Seesar is no lion monster and falls far short of the picture painted by the legend; it is more a refugee from a Japanese superhero TV series and less a lion because of its bat face and poodle hair cut. Seesar is an amphetamine driven stronger in conflict, and its actions remind one of Bert Lahr's exitable lion in the *WIZARD OF OZ*.

Titled for U.S. release initially as *GOZOZILLA VS. INONIC MONSTER*, the film became *GOZOZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER*, possibly a result of pressure from the producers of *6 MILLION DOLLAR MAN* who claimed copyright infringement of the word *biomech*. The film contained footage scraped from *HEDORA* and *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN*.

The 1975 production *TERROR OF MEGAGODZILLA*, a sequel of sorts to the 1974 picture, brings with it a class absent from the other Seventies Toho Godzilla films with the possible exception of *GOZOZILLA VS. HEDORA*. Director Ikuo Honda's return, who molded the genre, positively affects a charge. *TERROR* retains character complexity and production polish in spite of the clichéd trappings of the story. Monster photography often is shot at ground level, and actors have things to do to develop their persona. Praise can be steeped too high, but considering the quality of monster material levied at the viewer since the beginning of the Seventies, *TERROR* is a faint light in an otherwise dull night sky.

Akira Ifukube Hirata, once again an eminent man of science, appears as the aged Dr. Mafune, a man once shunned by academic society due to a proclamation in which he admitted the possibility of controlling a beast he discovered in the sea. Presently assumed deceased, the doctor lives a secluded life with his daughter and has completed work on a means to control the monster which has been named



Above left, the flying stage of monster He doah, and above, the first time audiences learn Godzilla is capable of flight, from *GOZOZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER*. Bottom, left to right: *GOZOZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER*, also starring Angiles and Ghidrah; *GOZOZILLA VS. MEGALON*, also featuring Angiles and Ghidrah; *GOZOZILLA VS. MEGAGODZILLA*, including King Seesar and a brief Angiles appearance; *TERROR OF MEGAGODZILLA*, also employing Tiamon.

Tiamon, Mafune is assisted by aliens from the Third Planet in the Black Hole of Space who use the device also to resurrect Mechagodzilla. Mafune's daughter, led in her effort to destroy the device because of its misuse, is miraculously reconstructed as a cyborg by the aliens who have installed the control unit in her body. Another control mechanism fabricated by the film's heroes is able to interrupt the invaders' message and substitute its own signal and thus stop Transistor Godzilla, the good guy, and win Mafune, his daughter, and the outer space intruders are destroyed by an intergalactic weapon.

Transistor, an interesting prehistoric-styled behemoth, is never allowed to unleash its strength, if indeed it has much. A mere pushover for the Japanese technologists, the creature is a useless facet of the screenplay. Though the monster wars in *TERROR OF MEGAGODZILLA* are familiar, the film fortunately co-stars a sympathetic character in Dr. Mafune, whose decay is presented through an effective succession of dramatic stills. The re-animation of his daughter creates even more headaches for the doctor, and she too acquires a depth due to her inability to clear up her inner conflicts.

Issued to U.S. theatres as *TERROR OF GOZOZILLA* and to American television retitled *TERROR OF MEGAGODZILLA*, the picture was a return to the past, albeit not a perfect one, and delivered hope for the next in the series—which was not to be.



flights of fancy

This chapter begins with one of the best science films ever to be developed by Toho: *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN*. It could be categorized as a disaster film, for it indeed is that, though its release anticipated that class of U.S. film, but it is much more. The picture is "one of the genuine epics of science fiction," to quote Bill Warren from his review in *Cinefantastique*. The film so impressed the Japanese that a *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN* television series was spawned by TBS.

Based on the extremely popular Seijun Suzuki novel, the 1973 film, running almost 2½ hours, slowly weaves a dramatic tale of an impending national catastrophe as viewed by a number of players literally and figuratively imprisoned by it—a step by step presentation of ever worsening events, explained by scientific fact in the picture, which eventually leads to the sinking of the archipelago known as Japan. It almost seems that the nation itself is the real star, for *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN* offers an incisive look at aspects of national personality which the Japanese value the most, and the sum is the people's love for their island nation. That their country should cease to exist would be the ultimate tragedy.

For *TIDAL WAVE*, the American version of the picture, Roger Corman's New World cast iron over an hour's worth of the central characters' reactions to the developments leading to the doom of Japan. What remains is only a disaster film—a poor man's *EARTHQUAKE*—an ineptly dubbed glimpse of people in panic amid Tenjirō Nakano's sequences of destruction effects which, though daring in concept, are not that accomplished—not what the film is about at all.

The bestized print includes newly-filmed English language footage which does not match the material surrounding it and acts as a sort of buffer zone to deaden the mounting tension. The American stars star Lorne Greene as a U.S. ambassador whose help is sought to relocate the people of Japan before the islands sink beneath the waves. The logistics and obstacles of re-settlement take on a new light when considering the problems faced by the refugees



SUBMISSION OF JAPAN: A city in flame; Hiroshi Fujioka and Ayumi Ishida, inset, two of the performers.

migrating to American shores from the Caribbean and Southeast Asia.

New World's ad campaign for print and broadcast media prominently features both the aquatic phenomenon of its new title and Mr. Greene, but Greene's screen time is brief, as is the tidal wave's, of which the latter is only one of several calamities tearing apart Japan. Is it any wonder that American audiences hold little regard for films from the Orient, migrating to American shores from the Caribbean and Southeast Asia.

A second Kurosawa novel, *Engau*, forms the basis of *ESPY*, a 1974 SF action thriller filled with colorful villains and heroes, the latter possessed of extra sensory powers and who are members of *ESPY*, an Interpol-like outfit peopled with agents of various supra normal abilities. Their powerful enemy is Counter *ESPY*, another group of paranormalists, but these are fanatics bent on global domination through kidnap and assassination of world leaders.

ESPY is fantastic fiction, unlike *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN*'s

scientifically convincing drama. Effects sequences, as witnessed by Nizzi in *Varney*, are "spectacular," especially

"an aurora incident over Alaska and an earthquake scene," the earthquake sequence revealed by the heroes, victorious in the end, obviously, to be a hallucination suggested by the leader of the revolutionaries.

A book by Ben Goto which details the prophecies of Nostradamus becoming actualities is the foundation for Toho's 1974 big budget successor to *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN*. The movie is *CATASTROPHE 1999*, released to American television in 1981 by UPA as *THE FINAL DAYS OF PLANET EARTH*. It examines the events which could spell the death of the Earth, presenting a near-future plagued by all manner of pollution, of catastrophes the pollution precipitates, and of the occasionally incredible effects the changes play upon a civilization becoming anarchic.

A scientist, realized by actor Tetsuro Tamba, who also essayed the role of the Japanese Prime Minister in *SUBMISSION OF JAPAN*, constantly warns the nation's top leaders to take heed of environmental trends. They might think him a bit too fanatical in his position, but they are

An environment gone berserk in *CATASTROPHE 1999*. Tetsuro Tamba, left, centered below large bat, plays a scientist who warns of the effects of pollution.



just as worried about having to tell the populace the path down which the country is headed, for the politicians have contributed to the eroding eco-system in their politically expedient decision making. With a pan-electronic score composed by Isao Tomita, the melodrama climaxes with a flesh-forward which lets the viewer survey a possible future world invaded by a humankind reduced to degenerate aetiological mutants.

With nature the antagonist in Toho's earlier film, beginning with tectonic movement, CATASTROPHE 1999 makes man's corruption of the environment the causality, forcing man in his increasing madness to survive by means of violence. Just as Toho's THE LAST WAR from 1961 was a warning to cease belligerent threats backed by nuclear arsenals, never more apropos than today, so is this film a warning, one of unavoidable disaster unless people work together to cease the fouling. The plot is a war-ranged and just, but the picture fails to inject a compelling human drama which could have made the impact that much more agonizingly real.

Mystery and intrigue in feudal Japan is an area often sought for documentation in that country's films. The 1974 movie DEMON SPIES takes that as its background to unravel the exploits of five demons raised by demon parents in hidden recesses of the Japanese mountains. The Force Five become members of the Shogunate's entourage to quell a plot to overthrow him, but when their task is completed, only two remain in support of their lord.

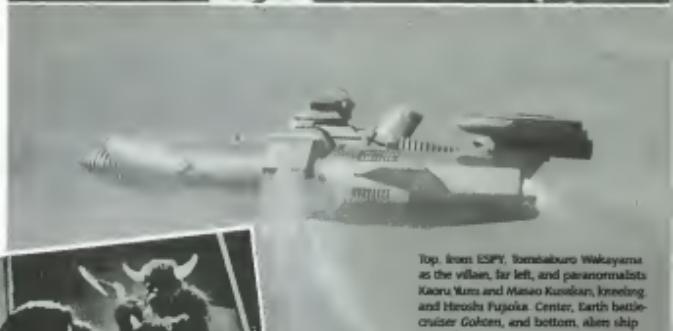
Toho's \$2 million entry into the box office war set off by the U.S. success of STAR WARS was rushed into completion to premiere in Japan before George Lucas' film opened there. THAT THE WAR IN SPACE, issued in 1977, was to emulate SW's blend of entertainment, action, and spectacle was a point conceded by Tomoyuki Tanaka, executive producer at Toho. He argued the changing nature of Japanese movie making with emphasis placed on large scale effects movies, hopefully co-financed with foreign dollars. An example in 1977 was the announced Toho/Hanser/Euan Lloyd co-production of NESSIE, a picture about the Loch Ness monster, for which Toho would shoot the effects at its studio near Tokyo. When Tanaka and his firm failed to realize about STAR WARS which excited moviegoers everywhere were the 1977 state-of-the-art visuals, competent thespian talent, a rousing score, impressive live action photography and set design, and a clever, fast-paced script filled with memorable characters, Toho's picture had none of this.

If plagiarism is at the heart of the matter, at least do it well and preferably better than the original from which it would be fashioned. Yet, THE WAR IN SPACE looks like an old Toho film picture with Japanese 1954 state-of-the-art effects, mediocre acting and score, unconvincing sets and a story right out of BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE. What's interesting is that WAKUSEI DAISENJO, the 1977 film's Japanese title, can be translated the same as that for the 1959 film.

THE WAR IN SPACE concerns an attack on Earth to gain a much needed energy source by green aliens based on Venus. The Earthlings, having just put the finishing touches on a super rocket, tangle with the invaders and their battle cruiser in a space war near Venus. The speed and strength of the Earth ship turns the tide in favor of the Terrans. Fortunately, Lucas had the foresight to set his stage "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away."

The Earthship Gohken of the film appears suspiciously like a cross between Astaragon and LATITUDE ZERO'S Alpha and can in fact burrow through rock because of its prow positioned on the evil Damakon is a refurbished 17th Century Portuguese galleon equipped with X-shaped solar cells, a Chinese dragon figurehead, and a series of anachronistic row-like appendages which power the ship through the ether. Hardware has always been a staple of Toho's genre films, and they were generally criticized because of it. It took STAR WARS to make it legitimate, at the same time rendering Japanese model construction and photography obsolete.

THE WAR IN SPACE failed to match Tanaka's expectations. Japanese audiences stayed away in droves. NESSIE was shelved. So much for Tomoyuki Tanaka's prediction on the changing nature of Japanese motion pictures. The space opera was eventually picked up for distribution to American television in 1981 where it became evident that Toho resorted to cannibalizing destruction footage from its SUB-



Top, from ESPY: Tomokazu Wakayama as the villain, far left, and paranormalists Kaoru Yama and Masao Kusukami, kneeling, and Hiroshi Fujisawa. Center, Earth battle-cruiser Gohken, and bottom, alien ship Damakon, in THE WAR IN SPACE. The space opera's wookie-like creature, inset.



MERSION OF JAPAN and CATASTROPHE 1999 to speed up the film's release in Japan.

1978's *BLOOD TYPE: BLUE*, titled in pre-release as *UFO BLOOD CHRISTMAS*, details an investigation by a NHK reporter, portrayed by the excellent actor Tatsuya Nakada, which leads to the discovery that the blood of certain individuals has become blue in color. A possible explanation between exposure to UFOs and the transformation is proffered, but government paranoia and human suspicion inhibit a temperate investigation. Official discrimination against those with the abnormal blood soon has sway over the populace. The heavy-handed delivery of the allegory makes the film's long 157 minute running time appear much, much longer.

HINOTORI, Toho's 1978 production entitled *THE PHOENIX* in most promotional copy, is director Ken Ichikawa's sendup of every samurai film ever released, here spiced with snippets of cartoon animation directed by ST author and illustrator Cesario Tezuka, slow motion, stop action, and maniacal effects in the form of a volcano and an earthquake. The message of HINOTORI that being mortal one should live life to the fullest, is the simple lesson of Tezuka's tale which symbolizes humanity's origin, not just Japanese history.

The immortality of the title's character is the running device Osamu Tezuka used to envision his eight volume



HINOTORI
left & right,
a 1977 film
based on volume one
of Osamu Tezuka's eight volume
comic linked by the Phoenix.
Center: Tezuka art from his book.

comic series he began in 1954 to represent the history of the human race as observed by the mythical bird. Each volume is a complete story situated in different eras of the past, present, and future. HINOTORI depicts volume one.

Ultimately, the focus of the picture is upon the mythic phoenix and two warring clans attempting to capture the bird to drink its eternal life-giving blood. What detracts from the struggle is the phoenix itself which, as indicated by Herb in *Variety*, in animation "emerges as a comical Woody Woodpecker big bird." Though killed at the climax, the Phoenix is consumed in flame, enabling another to emerge and soar into the sky.

Haring poorly in its Japanese release, the film's problem is its resistance on remaining faithful to the original story's comic book format by using outlandish makeup on the actors to recreate the comic art characters. Too, the excessive people/animal carnage, decapitation of an entire



platoon of horses, for example, dulls the senses early in a screening of the movie. "Even with this comic book approach, the tale is too unwieldy to succeed because of its length," Herb continues. "Any we're cutting would make the story incomprehensible. As a Saturday matinee serial, HINOTORI could run for months." Rumor has it that director Ichikawa offered his apology for the film to Tezuka even before it was released, though Tezuka himself has to share some of the blame for his comical animation, including a guest appearance by his Mighty Atom.

The sweeping popularity in the Seventies of animation in Japanese television and features found an indifference in Toho. The studio continued to play it safe in the live-action medium, losing a larger share of the audience with each new release from *Devil Dogs*, *Academy*, *Lia*, and other emerging cartoon nifties. Animation enabled its producers to be as wild and creative as their imaginations would let them. The process lent itself to the extraordinary. And animation was cheaper. Toho eventually would take notice of the phenomenon, but not until the Eighties. Could the success of the early Toho sf, fantasy, and humor pictures be revived? Maybe through animation the opportunity would be offered. ■

TOHO FILMOGRAPHY ADDENDA

The borderline fantasy *HIBRY KURAMA*, from 1956, about a priest who uses hypnosis to make his enemies powerless; *ONNA*, another 1956 production and borderline fantasy horror film in which a man sees an unearthly light flickering over the corpses of a dead husband and wife. A hunting tale about a super strong person in *SHOCKOUT CROPS*, a 1957 picture directed by Motoyoshi Oda (*INVISIBLE AVENGER*, *GIGANTIS*, 1957's *SECRET SCROLLS*, set in feudal Japan with each portion of feature length and directed by Hiroshi

Inagaki (*THE THREE TREASURES*, *THE YOUTH AND HIS AMULET*). Director Kozo Sasaki's (*SHIMATSU TRAVELS WITH GHOSTS*, *MY FRIEND DEATH*) 1958 color fairy tale *THE BADGER PALACE*, concerning badgers who save a princess from an evil spider queen. A woman who blasts worms with a weapon concealed behind her eye patch in *THE AGE OF ASSASSINS*, a fantasy comedy directed by Kihachi Okamoto (*BLOOD TYPE: BLUE*, *THE SPOOK COTTAGE*), from 1967. *THE KILLING BOTTLE*, a 1967 sf spy film starring Nick Adams which introduces a new weapon to espionage, a bottled substance whose release enables it to expand thousands of times, suffocating its victims. From 1968, *KUSO TENGOKU* (trans.,

FANCY PARADISE), a nonsense sf-comedy directed by Ken Matsuzawa, in which a gentle frog-like alien, gifted with telepathic and time altering powers, comes from planet Kabura to Earth to have fun. Released Oct. 20, 1969, and double-billed with *GODZILLA'S REVENGE* in Japan, *KONTO GOGO-GO ICHU DAIJINREN* (trans., *GREAT SPACE ADVENTURE*), director Jun Fukuda's sf comedy starring the comedy team Komo Gogo Co., rivals of the *Crazy Gals*, and featuring the rocketship from *INVASION OF ASTRO MONSTER*, most likely in stock footage. Announced in 1969, but never filmed, *STAR OF ADAM* (*KOTORO TO CINNA NO SHIMA*), a science fiction movie about the survivors of WWII who travel to another world, to have been directed by Hideo Ouchi.

the toho legacy



Above: Gamera from Kabaya. Comedy troupe Komo Gogo-Go, right.



THE LAST WAR

**A Statement By M. Shimizu,
President, Toho Co., Ltd.***

The time has come for us to make this picture... Newspapers, radio commentators, scholars, common men—all speak of a dread hovering ominously over the entire world every second of every day. If—we repeat—if this dread should descend upon us, it will result in the destruction of mankind and, perhaps, life itself.

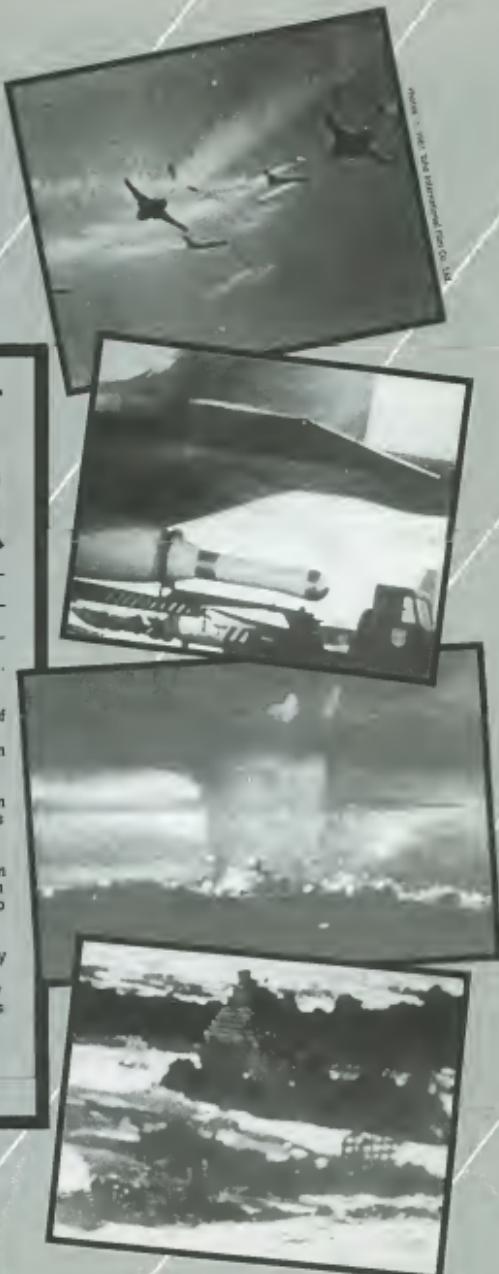
Men of intelligence are taking great pains to avert it. This is indeed commendable; there can never be too much effort exercised toward this end. But still we live in fear that a great war, the Last War, may come.

We, the Japanese, are in a better position than people of any other nation to make a film such as this. We side with no one; we are inimical to no one. **THE LAST WAR** is presented as our appeal to the world.

We of the Toho Company are employing every vestige of our technical skill to represent as realistically and appealingly as possible exactly what will happen if this colossal horror befalls us.

It is our sincere hope that by producing and exhibiting this film we can serve the cause of peace.

Limited upon release of this film until 1961.



* M. Shimizu (Shimizu Masaaki), 1901 - 1961



ALTERNATE FUTURES FROM **TOWA**

From distributor Toho-Towa emerged two imaginative animation films leading viewers into worlds unknown.

The appeal of the future lies with our hopes for a better tomorrow and the possibilities of the effect technology will impose upon that tomorrow. That's news? Not really. The news, old hat to Japanese animation devotees, is the outpouring of animated films and television series by the film studios in Japan, both majors and independents alike, which deal with those possibilities as viewed with the studios' unbridled passion for fantasy. Toho-Towa, a leading film distributor in Japan for the independents, has released two very successful independently-produced animated features which take a fantastic look at what lies down the road.

SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA

Based on a popular manga by Buschi Terayama which was serialized in *Shonen Jumpu*, **COBRA** is a wild sf/comedy/adventure released July 3, 1982 and filled as being in 3-D, though the 3-D effects are nothing more than

bits of computer animation. The picture succeeds an animated television series with the same moniker, both film and series a product of the Tokyo Movie Shinsha animation facilities. Surprisingly, all three—the manga, the movie, and the series—display typical American stereotyping in their use of a handsome hero who is rough,

tough, and a womanizer, and the voluptuous, under-dressed females he meets.

Cobra, a space pirate by trade, is best described in his own words: "I would only think of living in a world full of danger ... Guess 'ta my nature. Hell, hopeless fools like me can be cured only by passing away ..." With this philosophical bent, the lusty rogue faces the battlefields of space with bad temper and cynicism.

Actually, at the beginning of *COBRA*, the hero, unaware of his true identity as the space pirate, is a down-and-out nebbish named Johnson. Cobra, thought killed in a bomb blast, hid from his antagonists by having his memory erased and face altered, taking on the new identity, yet still grafted to his left arm is a powerful psychic energy weapon called the "Psycho Gun." Johnson's adventures resurrects the remembrance of his previous incarnation, and aided by Jane, a bounty hunter, Lady, Cobra's armored (armored android) partner, and Turtle, his hi-tech spaceship, Cobra takes on Guld, the evil overlord who threatens to conquer the universe, and his master, Crystal Boy, a cyborg who plans to send the star Mirus into our sun with the ultimate goal of destroying the solar system.

What Jane wants from Cobra is not his head for the reward, but his help in saving the solar system, the first step in this goal being to find her triplet sisters Catherine and Dominique. When Jane is killed in a battle her spirit is transferred into Catherine, and she and Cobra fly to Mirus where Crystal Boy, his master, and Dominique, on Crystal Boy's side, lay in ambush for them.

Buchi Terasawa's original story was co-adapted by Hayao Miyazaki who previously penned for the screen *STAR OF THE GIANTS*, a baseball tale, and *LUPIN THE THIRD—CAGLIOSTRO'S CASTLE*.

Author Terasawa contributed to teenage girl magazines early in his career and later, under the guidance of Osamu Dezaki, began "Cobra" in *Shonen Jump* in 1978.

COBRA's director, Osamu Dezaki, started in the film business directing episodes of *ASTRO BOY* and the live action TV show *BIG X*. His theatrically-released animated directorial efforts include the boxcar film *TOMORROW'S JOE* and its sequel.

Animation director for *COBRA*, Akio Sugino has worked on several television series including *LED THE WHITE LION* and directed as his first animated film *SANJI TO IKI TORI MONCHIKAE*. He teamed with director Dezaki on *ESU WO NERAE* and *TOMORROW'S JOE II*.

HARMAGEDDON/The wrecking (energy) ball of the Evil Entity and its destructive capabilities are shown above left, a result of the Evil Entity's bid to take over the Earth. In the final sequence of the picture, above right, all of the Pacific Warriors concentrate on focusing their minds in their attempt to thwart that plan. Left, promotional art from the 1983 animated motion picture.





SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA/ Space pilot Coles and bounty hunter Jane, above, flying on an air bike in their quest to prevent the star Marus from being sent into our sun by King Gemma. Poster art, above right, for Tokyo Movie Shinsha's film.

HARMAGEDDON

The manga "Gemma Taisen" ("War Against Evil" or "Armageddon"), a collaboration between *si* author Kazumasa Hirai and artist Shotaro Ishimori, is the foundation to the animated film HARMAGEDDON, distributed in Japan by Toho-Towa. "Gemma Taisen," first published in *Shonen Magazine* and thought impossible to translate to film due to the complexity of the beast, the beast in this case being the 18-volume, still-in-progress saga by Hirai and Ishimori, in the hands of producer Haruki Kadokawa (MIRUS) became Kadokawa Film's first cartoon feature. Having premiered March 12, 1983, HARMAGEDDON eschews the James Bond approach of COBRA as this animated vision of "What if?"

In route to the United States on a mission of goodwill, Princess Luna, the first queen of Transylvania, is hurt in a plane crash and suddenly finds herself projected to a galaxy 3,000,000 light years away. There she hears the voice of Fley, Keeper of the Cosmic Energy. "The lethal hand of King Gemma [evil Entity] the Destructor stretches over the universe!" She teams with Vega, a cyborg warrior sent by Fley to gather companions on Earth who are endowed with superpowers. Meanwhile in Japan, young Jo Asuma suddenly feels inside him a mysterious power beyond his comprehension. As this and other telepathic messages begin sent all over Earth by Princess Luna reach more receptors, including a black youth named Sonny, the Evil Entity unleashes a deluge which submerges New York city, turns Tokyo into a desert, and reawakens the once-dormant Mt. Fuji. In retaliation, the superpowered Psionic Warriors gun forces against King Gemma.

"Gemma Taisen," apparently based on the "Book of Revelations," details the escalation of the corruption of our civilization as personified by the Evil Entity, Jo Asuma is the counterforce—it is a battle between Light and Darkness. In between the antagonists the Earth remains the setting for Armageddon.

The Evil Entity materializes in human form to tempt the flesh and spirit. Spiritual values are, then, completely subjugated by materialistic interests, and Masakuni wanders without direction. This anxious feeling is the driving force which stimulated Kazumasa Hirai to write "Gemma Taisen." His message is that love, kindness, and mercy are qualities to be found not in the materialistic world, but in the heart. Jo Asuma carries this message in the series, but then Asuma is Hirai's alter ego. His commitment to this message can be measured in Hirai's own thoughts: "I don't care who writes or publishes it, provided it's written and published somehow."

Hirai also has written other material for comics including the serial "Wolf Guy" which began in 1967 and which like "Gemma Taisen" is still being produced. His collab-

orator, Shotaro Ishimori, has had a remarkable career in his own right in publications, but appears to have found his niche in live-action and animated films and TV shows as author/creator/supervisor on such productions as CYBORG 009—LEGEND OF SUPER GALAXY and the MASKED RIDER television series.

HARMAGEDDON director Tetsuji Ito has had successful careers in television and the cinema as well, directing episodes of the animated series ASTRO BOY and LEO THE WHITE LION and many features including CAPTAIN HARLOCK, GALAXY EXPRESS 999 and its sequel.

Takemura Mutsuo, art director for HARMAGEDDON, designed backgrounds for ASTRO BOY and acted as art director for MARCO, both GALAXY EXPRESS 999 pictures, and the CAPTAIN HARLOCK film, among others.

Animation director for Kadokawa's film, Taku Noda worked on TV's GETTER ROBOT G, GARKIN, and the features CAPTAIN FUTURE and SWAN LAKE. He also produced layouts for ADIEU GALAXY EXPRESS 999. Yoshinori Kanada, credited for special animation on HARMAGEDDON, worked on the series GARKIN, ZAMBOT 3, and GAITAN 3, and the motion pictures TOWARD THE TERRA, both GALAXY EXPRESS 999 films, and CYBORG 009. Kanada also created the opening title sequences for TV's GALAXY CYCLONE BRYCAR.

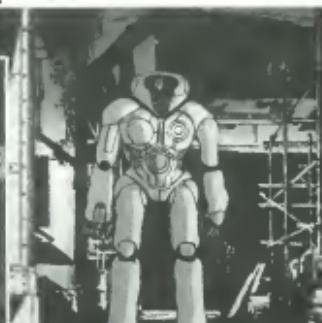
HARMAGEDDON/Warrior Vega, a cyborg, right, appears before Jo Asuma as a test of his ESP abilities. Below, Princess Luna and Vega fly over Tokyo as Luna telepathically transmits a message to Jo Asuma so that he may join her in her battle with King Gemma, also known as the Evil Entity, in this motion picture from Kadokawa Films based on an 18-volume Japanese manga.



Our grateful appreciation goes to Norio Iguchi who translated the reference material upon which this article was based. We also wish to credit Jane E McGuire for additional material.

Credits
SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA (SUPESU AOOBENCHYA KOBURABA) A Tokyo Movie Shinsha Production Distributed by Toho-Towa. Executive producers, Yuraku Fujio, Tetsuo Katayama. Producer, Tetsuo Itouchi. Director, Osumi Gisaku. Animation director, Aki Sogino. Original story, Ruchi Terashima. Screenplay, Buichi Terashima, Noruya Yamazaki. Produced in collaboration with Kowa International. Released July 3, 1982. Color. Ghibly stereo. 91 minutes

HARMAGEDDON (GENMA TAISEN) A Kadokawa Films Production. Distributed by Toho-Towa. Executive producer, Haruki Kadokawa. Producer, Susumu Akiyagawa. Director, Tetsuji Ito. Based on "Gemma Taisen" by Kazumasa Hirai and Shotaro Ishimori. Screenplay, Makoto Naito, Chihio Katsura, Mamoru Masaki. Supervisor, Masao Maruyama. Director of photography, Iwao Yamada. Animation director, Taku Noda. Special animation, Yoshinori Kanada. Assistant director, Susumu Ishizuka. Art director, Takemura Mutsuo. Character designer, Katsuhiro Otomo. Released March 12, 1983. Color





move over garfield, here comes your competition from japan

The importance of comic books to filmmakers is perhaps best exemplified by the case of a character named Doraemon, two of whose feature-length animated adventures, *DORAEMON—NOBITA NO KYORYU* and *DORAEMON—NOBITA NO UCHU KAITARO*, were "their" third and second biggest money-making releases in, respectively, 1980 and 1981 (Toho acted as distributor, although Shinsei Organization actually produced the films).

Doraemon is a robot cat from the 23rd century who lives in the present with a little boy named Nobita and his family. Whenever Nobita finds himself in trouble, his futuristic feline friend reaches into a special "four-dimensional pocket" and withdraws secret weapons—a bamboo copter for making quick escapes or a special lipstick that forces the person to whose mouth it is applied to tell the truth.

Doraemon debuted in the pages of a comic magazine, *Gekuren Zasshi*, in 1970. Its creator is Fujio Fujiko, a pseudonym for two cartoonists, one named Fujimoto, the other Akio (thenon). Fujiko, both also responsible for the popular *Oba O* strip about a molecat ghost.

Shogakukan, publisher of *Gekuren Zasshi*, reports that fan letters addressed to Doraemon or Fujiko number about 100,000 a month. Previous paperback collections of Doraemon's exploits—18 titles in all—have sold over 30 million copies, a figure the publisher says is equalled only

by the combined sales of its 38 paperback collections of yet another cartoon character, baseball star Goko Ben.

In addition to his Toho features (the cat starred in a third and fourth feature in 1982, *DORAEMON—NOBITA NO GAIMONO* and *DORAEMON FESTIVAL*), Doraemon has also appeared in a campaign organized by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and has been the star of TV commercials for confections, frozen foods, toys, soft drinks and tea. For children wondering what to do with their allowance money, there are an estimated 300 different kinds of Doraemon-related products to choose from, including badges, dolls, stationery and savings banks.

A major factor in Doraemon's impact on the Japanese is, not unexpectedly, television. Premiering on TV Asahi in April of '79, the adventures of the blue-hued feline were broadcast Monday through Friday from 6:30-7:00 p.m., regularly garnering ratings in excess of 20%. Now (as of May, 1982) *DORAEMON* is shown only on Fridays from 7:00-7:30 p.m., but still cops impressive ratings. Indeed, during any given week, the program will make it into the Top Thirty Programs chart compiled by the Tokyo-based ratings firm, Video Research.

Putting words into Doraemon's mouth is Nobuko Oyama, a 20 year veteran dubber whose past voices include those of a goby, a cricket and the leg of a desk. "That one was

easy," she avers, "since no one has any idea what a desk leg talks like." Oyama is noted for her hoarsely unique vocalizations and is in constant demand, especially when the character to be dubbed is an animal or exceptionally naughty. Nonetheless, she refuses to take more than one dubbing assignment during any given TV season, although she is not averse to appearing in TV series and is currently (as of May 12, 1982) a regular on two TBS offerings, one on TV Asahi and one on Nagoya TV.

Oyama, whose fame is beginning to eclipse that of her well-known husband, actor Kenzō Tsunagawa, has her own theory about the surge in Doraemon's popularity: "It's all a matter of good timing," she says. "Five or six years ago, not all that many people read science fiction stories. But times have changed and now even kindergartners know about time machines. Doraemon, being an SF creation and cat besides, is a natural."

No shrinking violet, Oyama is positive that no one else can do the cat's voice, and Doraemon's creators agree, saying the cat's image and voice are "perfectly matched." About the only complaint Oyama has about the job is that the posture she must put on her stomach to produce Doraemon's voice makes her hungry and, consequently, she feels she's now beginning to look like the roly poly cat. ■

Reprinted from *Variety*, May 12, 1982.



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Poster for Daisu's HAUNTED CASTLE.

HAUNTED CASTLE

The director has built a gripping film out of cliché.

In 1726, Lord Nubesuma (Kochi Uenoyama) of Sago takes a fancy to a blind monk's sister, Saya (Mitsuya Kamei). Monk Matsuhichiro (Akikusa Tada) lives on a small "sympathy allowance" of 3000 koku (one-tenth of land), though once he can dominate the region Sogi, he refuses to bow to Lord Nubesuma's lecherous interest in

Saya. During his regular game of go (an Asian variant of chess), Matsuhichiro detects the Lord and his chamberlain (Mutsuhiko Tsuru) trying to cheat at the game. The chamberlain denies having removed a piece from the gameboard. In the ensuing argument, the Lord and chamberlain kill the monk, whose dying words are "It's unfair gosho!" At that moment, in the temple, Saya sees a string break on the blind man's lute. The chamberlain has the body dumped in a well and the well filled with sand.

Tama, the black cat which earlier tried to keep the monk from leaving the temple in the first place, brings a bloodied bit of cloth to Saya, which she recognizes as part of her brother's clothing. Bidden to leave Sago the next morning, she chooses suicide over banishment, cutting open her stomach, asking the cat Tama to lap her blood as she dies. In this way the cat gains supernatural powers and can haunt the castle.

Komori (Kyoji Hongo), a sympathetic vessel, tries both to resolve the mystery of the monk's death (not knowing his own master is the culprit) and to divest the castle of the murderous ghost-cat. The cat first possesses the body of a lady-in-waiting, who becomes a grotesque female spirit killing innocent women in the castle. Vassal Hanazemon Komon manages to slay the possessed woman, but the spirit merely takes over Lord Nubesuma's wife, Toyo (Naomi Kobayashi). Thus the Lord grows ill from making love to his own wife.

A weird exorcism ends in the death of several priests. Vassal Komon elicits the aid of the temple's abbot, who creates a shirt inscribed with protective sutras which he will wear while banishing the ghost woman, a similar kind of device being used in the story of Hachiko the Endless in KWAIDAN, directed by Masaki Kobayashi.

The scenes where the cat ghost woman is leaping and slithering along the roof, with two spears hanging from her fists, are spectacularly horrific. At the cost of many lives, Komon finally succeeds in killing the spirit, and the dead body of the cat lama travels as a lightning bolt to the well where the blind monk was buried. Lord Nubesuma gives up his sexual excesses as a result of the horrifying consequences, ren states the dead monk's family, and sends Komori off to find the heirs of Saya and Matsuhichiro.

The elements of HAUNTED CASTLE are very much typical of the genre. The blind victim, supernatural cats, and frighteningly grotesque ghosts who float around murdering with their supernatural strength, are all basic themes. Though saddled with cliché, HAUNTED CASTLE is superbly directed, Tokuzo Tanaka having an ability to take stock elements and create films

which are gripping from beginning to end, as he has done with numerous genres of Japanese film. The film abides the standard theme of revenge by not having the villainous lord simply killed, making him penitent instead. The hero of the piece must balance his feelings of real justice against his responsibility to a lord whose actions started the grief. This dilemma is genuinely resolved, rather than avoided by the easy ending of having everybody killed off. A reasonable script, excellent widescreen cinematography, and competent direction lends HAUNTED CASTLE a feeling of actual legend, rather than of exploitation cinema.

Other fantasy films by Tanaka include the perfectly dreadful SASARUE OMON (THE GIRL WITH BAMBOO LEAVES, Daisu, 1969) about an acrobatic woman who uses bamboo leaves as though they were steel darts, killing people left and right; THE WHALE GOD (UJIRU GAM, Daisu, 1962) about a demonic killer whale which terrorizes a fishing village; THE SNOW WOMAN (KWAIDAN: YUJU JORO, Daisu, 1968),

which is also the subject of an episode of Kobayashi's classic KWAIDAN. One of Tanaka's earliest films has the evocative title OGIRE OF MOUNT DE (OSENMA SHUTENDO), Daisu, 1960, but I've not been able to ascertain whether or not it is really about an ogre, though a subtitled print does exist in America. All of his supernatural films have medieval settings.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson

HIROKU KABUDODEN (aka MYSTERY OF THE CAT WOMAN) A Daisu Motion Picture Co., Ltd. film. Released December 20, 1969. Director: Tokuzo Tanaka. Screenplay: Shozaburo Asai. Photography: Hiroshi Imai. Art director: Seiichi Ota. Editor: Hiroshi Yamada. Music: Hiroshi Mima. Assistant director: Riko Endo. Filmed in Fujicolor and Daeriscope. Cost: Kyoji Hongo, Naomi Kobayashi, Mitsuya Kamei, Mutsuhiko Tsuru, Kochi Uenoyama, Akane Kawasae, Nasako Dika, Ikuo Mori, Akioha Toda, Shizuko Nango, Kazue Tamaki, Shosaku Sugiyama, Seishiro Hara.

Mitsuya Kamei as the evil spirit about to enter the body of Naomi Kobayashi



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VILLAGE OF 8 GRAVESTONES

In spite of length the film displays an intriguing style and content.

A young man discovers he is heir to a large estate in *VILLAGE OF EIGHT GRAVESTONES*, but the moment he comes in contact with his heritage, villagers begin to die under agonizing circumstances. The victims are descendants of villagers who conspired four hundred years earlier to drug and murder eight samurai who had tried to become farmers in the area. The village's history has been marked by periodic mass murders, shown as vivid and frightening flashbacks. Since the young heir's father was named a mass murderer, the villagers are certain that the man orphaned in childhood and only now reinstated with the village is responsible for the new series of murders. For a while the viewer wonders, too.

In gruesome, arty flashbacks to the 15th Century, we witness what was the source of the curse of the eight gravestones. The leader of the eight samurai was last to fall, refusing to die until he could put the curse on the village. He is truly a great screen

monster as his strangely echoing voice promises doom to the conspirators and all their descendants. When he is finally beheaded, his expression remains animated by gleeful certainty that his curse will come true.

The film is for a long while ambiguous about the possibility of a supernatural explanation for the murders. We're led to believe that a woman new to the village is using the people's superstitious nature in order to murder all who stand in the way of her taking over the land.

Kiyoshi Atsumi—star of more than two dozen "Tora-san" comedies—plays an amiable detective who begins an exhaustive search of records and events, trying to solve the mystery. He travels around Japan tracing the original eight samurai to their birth places, checking family records and their descendants, until the trial leads right back to the village of eight grave stones. He proves to his satisfaction

that both the young man heir to the property and the widow new to the village are descended from the leader of the samurai who cursed the village. Together they are the catalyst that spells doom for the descendants of those who committed a crime four centuries before.

It takes an unwieldy length of time for the film, based on a bestselling novel by Seishi Yokomizo, to place all these complications of plot out, where the viewer can see them. Thirty minutes of this lengthy thriller could have been trimmed without injury to the story, improving the pace. However, slow as it moves, it's an exceedingly intriguing film both in style and content. Scenes deep underground in a truly eerie world are particularly overlong, but the sets and locations are so powerful it's perhaps understandable that the director, Yoshitomo Nomura, could not tear the camera away.

The payoff for the long wait is spectacular. The murderer becomes possessed of the ghost of the samurai, turning into a cat-eyed monster pursuing the heir through subterranean passages until his own latent power triggers a deadly earthquake. The sound and visual effects are meeting, the music by Yasushi Akutagawa appropriately macabre. The epilog, with the detective explaining everything, is unfortunately necessary, since key bits of information were left out before the climax, and things need to be tied up neatly with a closing lecture. It's too bad the film couldn't have ended on the phenomenal climax without the postscript to explain how the curse worked. Still, even with the flaws which better planning and editing could have cured, *VILLAGE OF EIGHT GRAVESTONES* remains a superior tale of the supernatural, one which deserves wider circulation than it has so far received.

As the film ends, we are given a final overwhelming image: the ghosts of the eight samurai standing on a hillside gazing down into the ravaged village, laughing. Pretty spooky.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson

YOSHIOKA MURAKAMI: A Shochiku Co., Ltd. film Color and Panavision 131 minutes. Released October 29, 1977. Director: Yoshitomo Nomura. Original story: Seishi Yokomizo. Screenplay: Seishiro Hashimoto. Director of photography: Takeo Kawamura. Music: Yasushi Akutagawa. Art director: Ryoko Morita. Cast: Kiyoshi Atsumi, Kenichi Hagihara, Mayumi Ogawa, Ryoko Nakano.

Armor worn by all the ninja in their final assault on Shogun leyasu.

DEATH OF THE SHOGUN

A superb if often incredible adventure.

Kinnosuke Yonoyama plays Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu in *DEATH OF THE SHOGUN*, a camp adventure more reminiscent of the best Chinese sword epics than a samurai film. Realistic sword battles are interspersed with supernatural and improbable feats. History comes with outright fantasy. Ieyasu's claim that an insulting scroll he has mailed into a ceremonial bell is historical. The use of drugs to induce cinematically captivating hallucinations among Ieyasu's enemies is, of course, pure fiction. This sort of mixture works surprisingly well.

Hiroyuki Matsukata plays Yukimura Sanada, a fanatic out to destroy the Shogun by any means. The theme to some degree parallels that of the *Mat Sain, Last of the Ninja* series from the 1960s, but the ultimate conclusion of this new version is very different. Seiwada's most important ally is the super-ninja spy called Monkey. Monkey's introductory scene depicts a Songoku-like anthropomorphic monkey leaping through the carriage, biseing swords with his bare hands. (Songoku was the wise monkey who accompanied Priest Sanzo from China to the Japanese version of a Chinese religious folk tale. They are the subject of many Chinese dramas, and the subject of a Japanese television series, available in a dubbed version but shown only in Great Britain. In the television series, Priest Sanzo was played by an actress rather than an actor.) This introduction of the ninja Monkey is so cleverly timed and edited that many a viewer is left uncertain that they really saw a monkey fighting. The illusion is never repeated, but the specific appearance of Monkey is subtly maintained.

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throughout his portrayal in DEATH OF THE SHOGUN.

Sanada and the ninja group make half a dozen graphically filmed attempts on the aging Shogun's life, some of them straightforward swordplay with excellent staging and choreography, some of them spectacular special effects sequences. In one special effects-oriented sequence, a hurricane lifts the combatants into the air, resulting in a sky battle.

The final encounter, with Sanada's assassins all dressed in brilliant red armor and attacking leytenant guards one by one (each introducing himself as Sanada), is a gorgeous melodrama and a fine celebration of martial arts. The ending, with the Shogun groveling for survival in the wilds, saving grass to stay alive, and pursued by the seal Sanada to a surprising conclusion, is very unsettling but perfectly satisfying. The viewer is left with the feeling that this has been a superb, if often unrealistic, adventure.

An epilog shows us the only survivor

among the assassins, Monkey, performing nimbus finger exercises on a mountain top, against a changing cosmos. There is a strong suggestion in this that Monkey was indeed a supernatural agent, whose coming into the world was heralded by a great meteor, and who can in some way influence even the position of the heavens, not unlike the monkey deity Sengoku.

Many a viewer may think they prefer the intense realism of directors such as Akira Kurosawa, but Sadao Nakajima is, in his own way, as grand an artist. He is the George Lucas of Japanese adventure fantasy.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Revised from a version published in Martial Arts Movies magazine.

SANADA YUKIMURA NO BOROMAKU (aka THE SHOGUN ASSASSINS). A Toho Co., Ltd. film. Released in 1979. Director, Sadao Nakajima. Cast, Kinmosuke Yorozuya, Hiroki Matsukata, Hiroyuki Sanada, Tetsuro Tanba.

ALRIGHT, MY FRIEND

Peter Fonda as an E.T. caught up in weak sci-fi allegory of the Japanese society.

Peter Fonda plays a superstrong man from outer space who falls to Earth where he is chased by evil doers called the Doors who want to clone him and build a master race. Sheltering him from harm are three Japanese who, even though they speak Japanese, have no trouble understanding this English speaking alien. At any rate, Fonda's the extra-terrestrial, by film's end, is able to say "Flown home!"

You get the feeling that this film came about when Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland turned to a group of their peers and said, "Hey, kids, let's put on an allegory!" The Odds, with their somber suits and ties and short, harcous, are, it seems, meant to represent conservative, male dominated Japanese society. Upon capturing Reona Hirota, they dress her in a kimono and set her to arranging flowers. They apparently lobotomize Hiroyuki Watanabe so that he performs his assigned job with uncomplaining, robotic efficiency.

The main failing of this supposedly trenchant social criticism is that the libertarian alternative to the Odds is symbolized by three unattractive simplets with the studiously "cute" nicknames Miruru, Monika (who is male), and Hachy. They are played by, respectively, Reona Hirota, Yashio Noo, and Hiroyuki Watanabe. Hirota is reasonably pleasant and has a rather nice figure; Noo isn't and doesn't. Watanabe is becoming another Victor Mature

The scientist and doctor is Ryu Murakami, a winner of Japan's most prestigious literary prize whose well-known love of films is evidenced by several cinematic references: Jirach Nezu's Ootori, with his Mandarin manners and Mao-style grey suit; is a virtual copy of "Or' No"; Hirota and Noo, and in a throwaway scene recalling BLOW-UP, play tennis without rackets or balls; and, of course, the film's central premise—aliens come to Earth—is composed of parts of E.T., THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, and SUPERMAN! That Fonda's strength is sapped by ordinary, garden variety tomatoes suggests that Murakami is even lazier with the cornball SFER, ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES. Good for him.

—A Variety, May 25, 1983 reprint

DAICHOBU, MAI FURENDŌ. A Kity film. Distributed by Toho International. Color. 119 mins. Released May, 1983. Producer, Hidemori Taga. Director, Ryu Murakami. Screenplay, Ryu Murakami, based on his original story. Director of photography, Kozo Okazaki. Assistant to director, Loichi Nakajima. Art director, Osamu Yamaguchi. Sound, Hideo Nishizaki. Lighting, Kazuo Shimomura. Editor, Sachiko Yamaji. Music director, Kasuhiko Kotoh. Cast, Peter Fonda, Jirach Nezu, Reona Hirota, Hiroyuki Watanabe, Yashio Noo, and Kumi Asahi.

THE JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

MAKING OF GODZILLA: JAPAN'S MAST

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JAPANESE GIANTS Number 7

This issue features an in-depth look at the Toho classic ATRAGON plus film news, the latest in Japanese animation and more. Send \$3.50 to Ed Godziszewski 5847 N. Markham Chicago, IL 60646 coming soon...

TRIVIA

Not so much tiredness this time, I'm afraid. Received some suggestions sent to me by the faithful out there. Your support is gratefully appreciated, to be sure. Here my own summary as supportive:

What say we kickin' television first. From that west wasteland, via Square Pegs comes the following dialogue. It ensues when a female student comments upon a name she heard that someone was supposedly creating a class magazine: "Oh,

you mean like Radan. Oh, no, that would have to have been Mr. and Mrs. Radan. How about Michael? someone friend Johnny. He immediately agrees and the Mother chart. The girl, in deeper grown demands, "We need help!" Ishaan replies,

From the print media emerges a most humorous analysis of monster movies by Dave Barry, whose

material for Feature Associates is syndicated to newspapers throughout the U.S. Mr. Story is hilarious and this excerpt comes from his article "Warrior at the Movies" - a few examples:

"The best movies, who I might expect, were made by the Japanese, who exported them in huge batches to the United States in the 1930's. These movies generally feature large reptiles or insects that eat out of the ocean and kill large quantities of Japanese. These movies are artistically balanced. On the one hand, you get the thrill of watching a large reptile or insect attack, on the other hand, you feel secure in the knowledge that it is wreaking havoc on people

An avid fan of heavy metal music, I chanced upon Metal on Metal by Anvil (Yo-Yo, Ltd 1138) which offers a supercharged raw-realist "Metallica" re-visit on The Motley Crew, which focuses on the allegorical nature of the John film. You might wish to check it out.

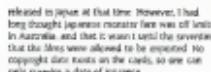
Finally, Jon Sime, entrepreneur of King's Games in Wanda, Qld, and dealer of fine magazines, this time for instance, advised us of a set of cards issued by an art supply company in Melbourne Australia. Each "Total Masters Step Card" was a bonus with the purchase of a Texa acrylic pen.

Cover art for DC Comics' third issue of *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew!* whose story is about a certain glass named "Frappable!" Submitted by Stayleen J. Krauss through the courtesy of DC Comics' Mike Ploof.

The set consists of a total of 35 cards, measuring 1 1/4" x 2 1/4" printed in ghostly colors [hand tinted black and white scenes]. But what makes the set so unusual is the fact that the great majority of the cards 35 to be exact, display Japanese monsters and two giant live-action robots, Galan and Ultros. The oddball card is a tight shot of Lon Chaney's wolfman.

I can only guess that the cards were distributed in 1966 or 1967 since the Japanese films and TV shows from which the names were culled were

A sample of the 36 "Tea Warmer Swap Cards" from Australia. What a collector's item!



Wish to thank Bob Johnson and Sean McDonnell for their invaluable contributions.

All for now. El Marshall McLuhan stops spinning. In his office.



Classified

FOR SALE American Cinematographer magazine on the making of movies. \$3 each. THE STING, SUPERMAN: THE BLACK HOLE, KING KONG (remake) CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK Japanese soundtrack remake, THE PARISIAN, etc. Send me \$1.00 and I'll send you a catalog.

— 10 —



Engineering Physics

Classmate #12: Subtitle: "The best music your ear had!" Expended from a legal document to magazine size: the new box boasts a hefty 300s of 36 one-page, offset printed pages with a selection of mostly subjects 32 will let you score with a look at new music, interview with Brad Holdaway and review of his CD *Concerto* interview with James Herlihy and review of his music for STAR TREK II. Interview with composer Great Hall, arrangers of MARCO POLO's and HALLOWEEN II's music. European fantasy film scores on record and more! CD and a well produced fanzine is to film fans what *Cinefile* is to the genre of visual art. Send to: Standard Letters, P.O. Box

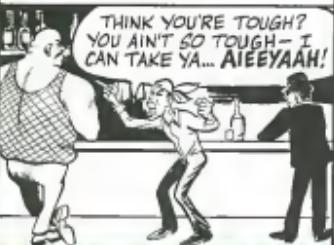
70805-Sunnyvale, CA 94085
The Jade Screen #3: Martial Arts Avenue also is gone, but this magazine returns, better than ever. There are 80 pages worth of superb artwork, photos, and great written material. This is one is a pleasure to read. Some of the content covers retrospective of Wing Chun, Wing Tsun, analysis of TOHNSU OF DRAGON, HUNGDRAGON, MARTIAL ARTS CRACKERS, AN EYE FOR AN EYE, THE TREASURE HUNTER, and many more. Interviews with Fu Sheng and Caesar Maung part 1 of a comic strip review of the art of Bruce Lee, issue 20, \$4.50 for 100 copy issue to: Katten Shueh: 9733 52 Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577.

FUNNIES

THE MAN WHO PLAYED GODZILLA

BOY MOURA'D GOUMOON

EVEN AS EARLY AS 1956, SOME SAID HARUO NAKAJIMA IDENTIFIED TOO CLOSELY WITH THE ROLE OF GOJIRA.



ONE DAY, WHEN THE AMERICAN FILM VERSION WAS SCREENED AT THE STUDIO, HE EXPLODED!

AIEENGAAH! RAYMOND BURR UPSTAGES ME, GOJIRA! I DEMAND ALL PRINTS BE RECALLED AND HIS SCENES CUT!

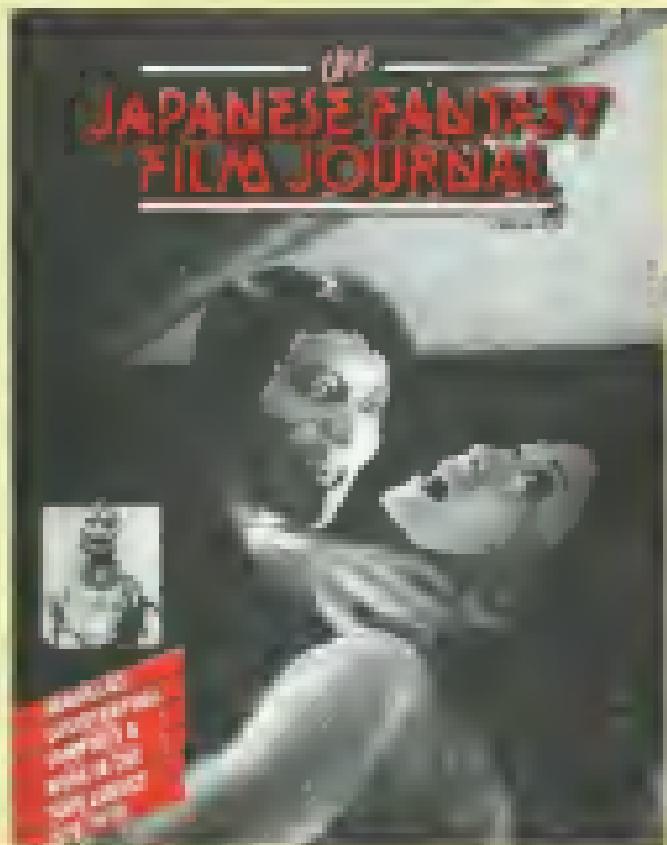


THEN THERE IS ONLY ONE HONORABLE THING TO DO...





GORATH



Japanese Fantasy Film Journal # 15 (1983)

Scanned cover to cover from the original by jodyanimator.

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